Transformative Learning through Professional Development in Conflict Resolution Training

A Thesis

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Dedicated to

Julia Katherine Brown

My darling daughter

Thank-you for reminding me, each day,
to be curious and to have fun learning.
You are my inspiration!

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Completing this thesis has been a journey of self discovery, transformative learning and personal achievement. Fortunately, I did not have to travel alone as there were many people who made the journey with me.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the experiences of 7 individuals who participated in conflict resolution training at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. An open-ended interview approach was employed to gather the data. During the in-depth interviews, each participant reported that they perceived a significant change in their perspectives towards conflict and conflict resolution after participating in various courses. Three participants also reported changes in their perspectives towards themselves as individuals. Each of the participants described how their participation in the conflict resolution training impacted both their personal and professional lives. The participants reported that as they applied their strengthened conflict resolution skills, they were able to make positive changes in their lives, such as improving their performance at work and building stronger personal relationships. In addition, 4 of the participants believe that they have expanded their career opportunities as a result of what they learned. Recommendations are made for future research in the area of conflict resolution training for adults. Personal reflections of the researcher conclude the study.

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CHAPTER I
Introduction

Overview

It would be difficult to think of
someway to live in a society,
changing as rapidly as ours, without
constantly learning new things.(Cross, 1981)

The world of work has changed dramatically over the years. Gone are the days when a person could become educated for a specific job and expect to remain educated for that job for an indefinite period. Moreover, very few people today can expect to be employed by the same employer for the duration of his/her career. Significant technological advances, coupled with ever increasing globalization of the economy are almost guaranteeing that individuals' skills and knowledge will become obsolete if not updated on a regular basis. In an effort to adapt to the rapid changes occurring in their professional lives, many adults are taking the time and initiative to pursue higher education. They are seeking to upgrade their learning and obtain more recognizable credentials. As adults experience increasingly complex changes in their careers, they undoubtably are experiencing greater levels of conflict. In response to the need for individuals and organizations to develop effective conflict resolution strategies, a proliferation of courses, workshops and educational programs focused on conflict resolution has occurred, including the establishment of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island.

My interest in conflict resolution training grew out of many conversations that I have held with a close friend, Kirstin Lund, who has successfully carved out a career for herself in the field

of conflict resolution. She is a conflict resolution consultant who offers services in mediation facilitation and conflict resolution training. She has also been a faculty member of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies since 1998. In addition she has coordinated many provincial and Atlantic projects related to conflict resolution and family violence prevention. Kirstin was also the person who suggested that I consider using the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies as a site for my research.

This study explored 7 participants' experiences with conflict resolution training offered through the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies (CCRS) at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). The overall questions that guided my research were:

1. What, if any, changes in perspective with regards to conflict and conflict resolution, did participants experience as a result of their participation in conflict resolution training at CCRS?
2. What impact if any, did participation in the conflict resolution courses, have on the professional and/or personal lives of the participants?

The first chapter provides an explanation of my personal interest in the research area, a description of the CCRS, the conflict resolution certificate program, the self-assessment tools that are employed in different courses, and the conflict resolution process that is the foundation for the skills that are learned, and finally a discussion of the potential significance and limitations of the study. The second chapter presents the review of the literature. The third chapter, describes the design and methodology of the study, the overall design and rationale, the site and population selection, the date management and analysis strategies, the trustworthiness features and the ethical considerations. A description of the research findings is presented in the fourth chapter. The final

chapter involves a discussion of the findings and some research conclusions.

Background

When I completed my undergraduate studies in business in 1989 and began working in the "real world" I never imagined that I would uncover my passion in the field of adult learning. I must say that it has been an unexpected journey of self-transformation. When I began my career, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with my father, who was very progressive in his thinking and his approach to business (before he retired, my father was an entrepreneur in both the nursing home and hotel industries). He believed that his business would succeed to the extent that his employees were successful. He advocated that strong business practices have, at their core, a commitment to human resource development. As a result, he encouraged all of his employees to continually develop themselves both personally and professionally. Being one of those employees, I was able to take advantage of numerous development opportunities that not only helped me to develop useful knowledge and skills, but allowed me to critically examine how I perceived myself and the world around me and to make significant changes in my life. As I embarked on my learning journey, I developed a desire to help others to learn. When I was asked to become the Human Resource Director for our organization, one of the most rewarding aspects of my responsibilities was the training and development of our team. Over the years, I developed and delivered many workshops designed to enhance productivity.

After leaving the family business, I became an adult educator in a formal learning institution. When I reflect on my experience in the field of adult learning, the most personally gratifying moments were those in which I witnessed individuals changing and growing as a result

of the learning in which they were engaged. Their growth went beyond skills development. I was always amazed at the level of change that some people were able to create in their lives. I enjoyed discussing with them, at later points, how a specific workshop or course had impacted them outside of the classroom.

When I began my graduate studies in education, I knew that I wanted to expand my knowledge in the field of adult learning. More importantly, however, I wanted to explore how professional development impacts the lives of participants. Throughout my initial course work, I focused my literature search in the general field of adult learning. Although tremendous work has been done in the field, I was not successful in answering the question: How does professional development impact on lives? Much is written about adult learners and effective strategies in facilitating learning, but I found nothing that went beyond the classroom to explore what learners actually did with the knowledge they gained.

Individuals, businesses, unions and organizations as a whole are placing a significant emphasis on continuous or continual learning (Caudron, 1999; Conrad, 1993; Payne, 1999). Continuous learning is seen as a way for individuals and organizations to stay ahead of the dynamic changes that face the world of work (Payne, 1999). Statements, such as the following, illustrate the importance of making learning and continual education a top priority: "If you don't actively stride against the momentum of skills deficiency, you lose ground. If your workers stand still, your firm will lose the competency race" (Solomon, 1999, p. 66). Payne states that employers are searching for learning opportunities that will help strengthen their bottom lines, and trade unions are negotiating for a wider range of personal/professional development learning opportunities for their members to help ensure their future employability. What is especially

interesting is that individuals are now realizing that continuous learning is a key to their continued success both professionally and personally (Caudron, 1999; Conrad, 1993; Payne, 1999). They are taking responsibility for their own development and are seeking ways to enhance their careers as well as their personal lives (Caudron, 1999; Chapelle, 1999; Conrad, 1993; Payne, 1999).

What is the impact of this increasing focus on learning? It is not enough that people will learn "about" something -- knowledge and skills need to become practice in order for education to have an impact. How are individuals' lives being impacted by their participation in training and education? How have their careers been impacted? Have there been any changes in their personal lives? This study explored these issues.

The educational needs of each individual are substantially diverse, therefore the scope of this study focused specifically on the experiences of 7 individuals who sought to make improvements in their lives by learning how to effectively handle conflict. These individuals chose to participate in courses offered through the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The phenomenological study involved in-depth interviews with selected participants. The interviews focused on exploring the experiences of the participants. Interview topics related to past and current perspectives, changes in perspectives and adjustment in actions with regards to conflict and conflict resolution. I strove to gain an appreciation for how the lives of the participants had been impacted by the training/education they had experienced The intellectual traditions that guided the study are firmly rooted in the fields of adult learning theories, continuous/continual learning, transformational and transformative learning and conflict resolution training.

Why Conflict Resolution Training?

Conflict is inescapable. It is evident in every relationship we have, whether it be personal or professional, and we can notice it in almost every situation we encounter (Fisher, Patton, & Ury, 1991; Weeks, 1992). Even though conflict is part of people's everyday lives, giving everyone ample opportunity to learn to manage conflict more effectively, Braman (1998) attests that "they fall short of what they would consider successful conflict resolution" (p. 30). Personally, I believe that Weeks (1992), effectively illustrates the relevance of conflict resolution training:

> Whether it be in our personal relationships, or our business interactions, each of us has our own ideas, opinions, and needs, and how we deal with our differences with others can determine the quality of our lives. Whereas some conflicts are simply minor nuisances that we accept as a natural component of existence, others keep our relationships from realizing their full potential, and some become so severe that they do irreparable damage to individuals, families, workplaces and entire communities. Learning how to deal with conflicts effectively is increasingly an essential life skill needed by every person and every group regardless of one's age, social role, profession, cultural background or beliefs. (p.ix)

As adults begin to take more responsibility for their education, rather than waiting for employers to provide the opportunity, many people are seeking out educational experiences to help them make improvement in their lives (Caudron, 1999). They realize that the world is becoming increasingly complex and that they must continually update their skills and knowledge if they wish to be successful (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Caudron: Gordon, 1997; Mezirow, 1991; Soloman, 1999). Since an increasingly dynamic and complex world suggests that adults are also facing even more challenging conflicts, a proliferation of courses, workshops and educational programs has occurred across the country and around the world. One of these programs is the Certificate in Conflict Resolution Studies offered through the Centre for Conflict Resolution

Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies.

Although the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies was officially established at the University of Prince Edward Island in April 1997, its conception phase can be traced back to the 1980s, at the community level. At that time, an informal group of individuals, interested in advocating non-violent approaches to conflict resolution, began to emerge. In 1991, the group held an initial consultation with the purpose of "establishing a network, sharing information and identifying our [sic] needs" (J. Lightwood, personal communication, November 7, 2002). Representatives from a number of sectors were invited and attended the meeting. From that meeting, the group determined that it was important to educate the public on violence prevention and alternative conflict resolution approaches in order to create "safer communities where violence would not be the automatic response." The network identified a need for training as means of public education. The community group organized a few training events over a period of 2 years. In 1993, Professor Verner Smitheram, who had been teaching a course entitled "Action in Conflict" at UPEI since the 1980s, joined forces with the network. Later in 1993, a project called "Communicating with Caring . . . Resolving Conflict Cooperatively" was funded by the Secretary of State and was launched in April. Several more training events evolved out of that project.

In 1994, the community group decided that they needed more structure to their network. They became incorporated as a cooperative in 1995 and became known as the Conflict Resolution Cooperative of Prince Edward Island. At this time, Professor Smitheram was the chair of the

cooperative's training committee. The committee recognized that even though the group had been successful over the years in delivering conflict resolution training on an ad hoc basis, in order for the training to achieve sustainability, funding would need to be generated. Unfortunately, funding for training was very scarce, therefore it was decided that the training itself would have to be its own source of funding and that a more formal structure for the training was required. Professor Smitheram had over the years, developed a passion toward the role of conflict resolution as a critical skill and he was extremely interested in promoting the application of effective conflict resolution approaches. Having had experience in teaching conflict related topics, he took it upon himself to research other conflict resolution training programs being offered across the country. He then collaborated with other members of the training committee to develop a comprehensive certificate program. Once the outline for the certificate program was completed, an interest in giving the program on institutional basis led Professor Smitheram to approach the University of Prince Edward Island, in 1996, with a proposal to house the conflict resolution program on the UPEI campus. He was granted permission and was given a half-time position to establish and operate the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies. In 1997, the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies became a unit of the university's Department of Extension and Summer Sessions which has since been renamed the Centre for Lifelong Learning.

In 1997, the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies offered seven courses. Its offerings have grown substantially over the years; in 2002 the course listing included 29 individual courses relating to interest-based conflict resolution strategies (see Appendix A). All the courses involve practical, skills based learning. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies also boasts a rigorous certificate program with a professional development credit.

The Certificate in Conflict Resolution Studies.

The specific goals of the certificate program in Conflict Resolution Studies are to provide theoretical and practical knowledge needed to resolve dispute; skills training in techniques of mediation, facilitation and negotiation; ethical guidelines for conflict resolution practice; and stimulus for conflict research in a variety of professional and social contexts. To qualify for the certificate students must complete a total of 210 credits. Each course is either 1, 2, or 3 days in duration, with each day equaling 7 hours of course credit. The breakdown of course credits is as follows:

1. 42 hours of credit from two core courses: Introduction to Conflict Resolution and Ethics in Conflict Resolution
2. 84 hours of credit from the following course selections:
    - 21 hours in foundation courses - either Understanding Conflict through Personality Type or Dealing with Anger
    - 21 hours in Mediation Level II
    - 21 hours in Negotiation Level II
    - 21 hours in Facilitation or Conciliation
3. 63 hours of credit in a combination of elective courses
4. 24 hours of credit in a supervised practicum, which involves a written test on interest-based methodologies and in ethics and a case application, in which candidates conduct an actual or simulated mediation, facilitation or negotiation, to test their practical skills (http://www.upei.ca/conflictcentre/certificate.html)

Terminology.

Upon interviewing the participants, a few specific terms, relating to the training offered through the centre, were mentioned that require a brief description. These terms, which may be unfamiliar to some readers, refer to the self-assessment instruments used to generate self-awareness by helping participants to gain insight into their own personality-based preferences as well as the preferences of others. As well, these instruments illuminate how different preferences affect communication and conflict resolution and the interest-based conflict resolution process that is at the foundation of much of the skills-training offered through the CCRS.

The Thomas-Killmann Conflict-of-Differences (MODE) instrument, is used in the Introduction to Conflict Resolution Course to address participants' preferred style of responding to conflict. The MODE "asks individuals to use two dimensions -- assertiveness and cooperativeness" (Womak, 1988, p. 321) to assess their behavior tendencies in conflict situations. When individuals complete the instrument, their score indicates which of the following "modes or ways of managing differences to satisfy one's own and others' concerns" (p. 322), upon which they tend to rely when faced with a conflict: collaborating, compromising, competing, accommodating or avoiding.

The Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) is used in the course Understanding Conflict Through Personality Type. This instrument allows people to uncover their preferences for directing their energy, processing information, making decisions and organizing their lives. The participants, once they have uncovered their "type"and have gained an understanding of the other types, are then able to learn how to use the knowledge for conflict analysis, for understanding self and others in conflict and for conflict resolution.

(http://www.upei.ca/conflictcentre/courses/UnderstandingConflict.html.).

The third instrument, the True Colors inventory, is used in the course True Colors and Conflict Resolution. The True Colors inventory is based on the MBTI. The instrument permits individuals to identify which of the four innate systems are driving their behavior; it uses four colors to represent four temperament types associated with psychological needs. (http://www.truecolors.org/About/). Applications of the inventory are then made to conflict prevention and resolution.

The interest-based conflict resolution approaches, used in the various course offerings, are based on a six phase conflict solving process that was developed by CCRS director, Professor Verner Smitheram. The six phases of the process are: set a positive environment, identify and reframe the conflict, identify and explore interests, identify the issues agenda, generate creative options and verify and close the agreement. Depending on whether parties are engaging in negotiation, mediation or facilitation, the specific steps and skills involved in each phase of the process vary slightly (V. Smitheram, personal communication, August 27, 2002) (see Appendix B).

Potential Significance

Research such as this work may allow the director and other faculty members of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies to explore the impact of the training on participants' lives of the participants. The centre's faculty may find the results useful in evaluating portions of their certificate program which in turn may impact on possible revisions to the program. Human resource professionals may review the findings to help them understand the possible impacts, if

any, that this type of training/education may have on the workplace -- this knowledge may then play a part in their decisions to purchase conflict resolution or similar training, for their businesses or organizations. Similarly, individuals who are seeking to develop their conflict resolution skills may review the findings to help them decide whether the training/education may meet their needs. Since the study may help people make decisions regarding training, the results may prove useful to the CCRS when it is designing its advertising and marketing strategies. With this study, I also hope to bridge some of the apparent gaps in the literature both in terms of how training has affected participants' lives, from their perspectives, as well as the effectiveness of conflict resolution training for adult learners.

CHAPTER II
Literature Review

To conduct the review of the current literature for my study, I chose the Educational Resources Information Centre, Academic Search Elite and Psyc Info databases. The preliminary search terms I used, were broad and included: adult education, adult learning, adult learning theories, life-long learning, continual learning professional development, and self development. I refined my search to include the terms: andragogy, transformative learning, perspective transformation, conflict-resolution-training and experiential learning. In addition to the hundreds of abstracts I read, I also reviewed numerous full-text articles as well as many scholarly texts relating to my topic.

After completing my comprehensive literature search, I determined that there was an apparent gap in the literature both in terms of how training has affected participants' lives, from their perspectives, as well as the effectiveness of conflict resolution training designed for adult learners. The literature that I reviewed, is discussed in the following four segments: adult learning, andragogy, transformative learning and conflict resolution training for adults.

Adults Learning

The changing demographics of society are changing the face of the typical learner in formal education settings (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999). Currently 50% of the students enrolled in higher education are over the age of 25 (Conrad, 1993). For research purposes, adults are defined as "learners who have assumed the social and culturally - defined roles characteristic of adulthood and who perceive themselves to be an adult, or, if those qualities are not ascertainable, learners

who have achieved an age, such as 25, which would be regarded as adult irrelevant of social circumstances" (Rachel, 2002, p. 220).

Society's attitudes toward learning are changing as well. Not only do adults need more education to stay ahead of the changes they are facing, they need to be learning on a continual basis (Fiddler, Marienclair, & Taylor, 2000; Jones, 1997). Significant technological advances coupled with the ever increasing globalization of the economy are impacting today's adults (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999). What someone learned during their undergraduate studies 10 years ago for instance, may be obsolete today (Tomlin, 1997). Adults "must be able to function in a fast-changing society, and this necessitates continued learning" (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999, p. 17). A significant number of adults spend most of their waking hours at work, as a result many of them, who choose to participate in learning activities, do so for job-related reasons (Caffarella & Merriam).

Understanding why adults are filling the classrooms in educational settings such as the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies is not enough; we need to gain an appreciation for the research and theory building work that has been conducted in the field of adult learning. Two of the models of adult learning that have received considerable attention and have effectively informed my study are Knowles' (1970, 1973, 1984) concept of andragogy and Mezirow's (1990, 1991, 1994, 1997) theory of transformative learning.

Andragogy

Knowles is considered to be the founding father of andragogy (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Cranton, 1992; Cullen, 1999; Holton, Naquin, & Swanson, 2001; Wilson, 1999). Although

he did not invent the term himself, Knowles did introduce the term to North America (Cullen; Holton et al., 2001). Knowles (1973) stated that the origin of the label andragogy could be traced back to Germany as early as 1833. Andragogy, according to Knowles (1970), is the "art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 38), as opposed to pedagogy which he referred to as the "art and science of teaching children" (Knowles, 1973, p. 42). Knowles (1970) believed that learning, for adults, is a process of meeting need and striving for goals set by the learners themselves. Essentially a training program will have an impact to the degree to which the individual learner has a need to learn and a perceived goal relating to the training; only then will he/she invest the necessary energy to make use of the training. It is based on a set of core assumptions about adult learners. Originally Knowles (1970, 1973) introduced four core assumptions; these included changes in self concept, the role of experience, learners' readiness to learn and learners' orientation to learning. In 1984, Knowles added another assumption to the list; it regarded motivation to learn. "The need to know [assumption] was added in more recent years (Knowles, 1987, 1989, 1990)" (Holton et al., p.120).

Since little has been written about the "need to know" assumption, and since it appears to been an extension of the "readiness to learn" assumption, I have chosen to focus on describing the five assumptions as outlined by Knowles (1984). How these assumptions might come to play in the context of conflict resolution training for adults has also been addressed.

Before describing each assumption, it is important to acknowledge that Knowles (1980) emphasized that his presentation of the assumptions were in their "pure and extreme form" (p. 9); however, in actuality, they exist on a continuum (Rachel, 2002) and can be altered depending on the situation (Holton et al., 2001).

Changes in Self-Concept

The andragogical model attests that as individuals mature they come to view themselves as being capable of making their own decisions and taking responsibility for managing their lives. They also have a strong need to have others perceive them as being responsible, and self-directing.

Since many adults entering a conflict resolution training classroom may not have experienced self-directed learning in a formal setting, they may appear to resort back to their childhood practice of waiting for their teacher to tell them what and how to learn. Knowles (1984) has advocated that if the facilitator employs strategies to encourage them to make decisions about what they want to learn and how they plan to apply their learning, they can help the learners make the transition from being dependent learners to being self-directed learners. More importantly, the more self-directed the learners become in the formal setting, the likelihood that they will choose to apply their learning, in their work and home life, may increase (Knowles, 1970, 1973, 1984).

Learners' Experience

The andragogical model emphasizes the distinct role that learners' experience plays in learning. Adults have accumulated a vast amount of experience over the course of their lives. They also occupy many different social roles such as employee, parent, spouse, community citizen and so on. The performance of these roles affect the quality of their experience. When an adult participates in conflict resolution training they bring their unique experiences into the learning environment. As adults engage in conflict resolution training, their experience can have both positive and negative consequences. Learners can use their experience to help them make

meaning of what they encounter. In addition, the learners can learn from each others' experiences (Caudron, 2000). Facilitators can enhance the positive aspects of participants' experiences by employing techniques such as group discussions, problem solving exercises and case studies that tap into the learners' experience. Facilitators also need to encourage learners to make plans and practice how they will apply learning in their day-to-day lives. The possible negative consequence of experience is that it can sometimes serve as a roadblock. If learners have developed a habitual way of perceiving and responding to conflict that is quite different than what they are experiencing in the course, then they may resist. They may become defensive and try to justify their past ways of thinking and acting in conflict situations. Facilitators of conflict resolution training need to help participants to critically reflect on, and learn from, their experience (Knowles, 1970, 1973, 1984).

Readiness to Learn

The andragogical model has assumed that "adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know or do something in order to perform more effectively in some aspects of their lives" (Knowles, 1984, p. 11). As aspects of individuals' social roles develop, their readiness to learn changes. In the context of conflict resolution training, a learner who has been recently promoted to a human resource management position for example may be seeking to learn how to mediate conflicts between management and employees. The same learner may not be ready to learn how the conflict resolution techniques apply in personal relationships. Readiness to learn, in this case, can be induced if the facilitators expose the learner to effective role models regarding application of the conflict resolution strategies in personal relationships. Facilitators could employ strategies such as group discussions, case studies and journal exercises, that could

help the learner assess the gap between the current quality of their personal relationships and the level of quality they desire to have in the future (Knowles, 1970, 1973, 1984).

Orientation to Learning

As was mentioned previously, the adragogical model has assumed that adults engage in learning to help them perform better in their lives, therefore they are seeking learning that is problem, task or life centered rather than subject-centered. Adult learners need to see the relevance of the learning to their life situations. They also bring a sense of urgency to the learning environment in that they want to learn today, what they can apply immediately in their lives (Knowles, 1970, 1973, 1984).

The adults involved in conflict resolution training may not respond well to the theory behind conflict and conflict resolution. They may be more interested in learning effective hands-on conflict resolution strategies that they can begin using immediately in their daily lives.

Motivation to Learn

The andragogical model has asserted that while sometimes adults have been motivated to learn due to external factors such as monetary compensation and better career advancement opportunities, most of the time the motivation for learning has been internal, "such as the desire for self-esteem, recognition, better quality of life, greater self-confidence, self-actualization, and the likes (Herzberg, 1996; Maslow, 1970)" (Knowles, 1984, p.12). Effective conflict resolution training would place as much emphasis on these kinds of outcomes as is placed on skills development. If learners experience greater self confidence for instance, as a result of learning

how relationships can be enhanced as a result of conflict resolution training, then they may be more apt to apply what they learn in real life situations.

The core assumptions about adult learners have implications for the educator of adults (Knowles, 1970, 1973, 1984). The second part of the andragogical model involves "steps for creating adult learning experiences" (Holton et al., 2001, p. 120). According to Knowles (1984) there are a number of elements that need to be incorporated into the design of an adult education program. These elements include: (1) creating an appropriate climate for learning, (2) involving learners in mutual planning, (3) helping learners to determine their own learning needs, (4) involving learners in developing their own learning objectives, (5) involving learners in developing learning plans, (6) helping learners carry out the learning plans, and (7) involving learners in evaluating their learning..

Since andragogy was introduced to the adult education community, it has sparked much "critique, debate and challenge . . ." (Holton et al., 2001, p. 119). Many people have questioned whether andragogy is actually a theory of adult learning (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Holton et al., 2001; Rachel, 2002). With regards to whether andragogy is actually a theory, Knowles (1989) himself, offered an explanation: "I prefer to think of it as a model of assumptions about adult learning or a conceptual framework that serves as a basis for emerging theory" (p. 112).

Some other criticisms of Knowles' work have centered around Knowles' conceptual focus on the individual rather than on the impact adult education has on society (Holton et al., 2001). On the other hand, however, "andragogy is an individual transactional model of adult learning" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 123). Caffarella and Merriam (1999) stated that Knowles originally advocated that learning in adulthood was very different from childhood learning, but that over the

years, he had refined his thinking in this area. "Close scrutiny of the five assumptions and their implications . . . led Knowles to back off his original stance that andragogy characterized only adult learning" (p. 274). Knowles (1973) emphasized that "the assumptions of andragogy apply to children and youth as they mature. . . ." (p. 42). Even though andragogy has been widely criticized, its "core principles of adult learning . . . have endured (Davenport & Davenport, 1985; Hartree, 1984; Pratt, 1988)" (Holton et al., 2001, p. 119).

Although andragogy has been cited extensively in the literature, there has been a lack of empirical research to examine its validity (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Holton et al., 2001; Rachal, 2002). Rachal provides some design standards that would benefit future research in the field. Research should explore learning situations that involve individuals who have chosen to participate for their own "personal development or internal motivator" (p. 220). It would not suit to include participants who have been mandated to attend. Participants of the research should be adults, as defined earlier. If the purpose for learning is "proficiency or competence in a content area" (p. 221), such as in the case of developing conflict resolution skills, then the assessment should involve participants actually performing the conflict resolution skills. "The ideal would be a performance assessment in which the performance is clearly successful or not successful, and where the learner's very purpose in pursuing the learning activity is to exhibit a desired outcome" (p. 221).

Once a new body of research is introduced to a field, it is natural for other people to "extend the work of the founder of an area of study" (Cranton, 1992, p. 15). One area of research that goes beyond the boundaries of andragogy is transformative learning theory.

Transformative Learning

"Learning means using a meaning that we have already made to guide the way we think, act or feel about what we are currently experiencing" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 10). The theory of transformative or transformational learning (transformative and transformational learning are terms that are used interchangeably in both the literature and this review) learning emerged out of the work of Mezirow in the late 1970s. (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Cranton, 1992; Taylor, 1997, 1998, 2000). It is considered to be unique to adult learning (Cranton). It was difficult to uncover literature that addressed empirical research on transformative learning. "A paucity of the available studies involving transformative learning theory . . . exist in publication" (Taylor, 1997, p. 35); therefore, I relied heavily on Taylor's (1997, 1998, 2000) reviews of the studies, that in most cases still remained in dissertation format or in limited conference proceedings. I have chosen Mezirow's concept of transformative theory as my basis for a theoretical framework while further drawing upon other literature to examine components of the theory.

So what exactly is transformative learning? Essentially Mezirow (1991), defined it as the "process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p. 12). The theory examines how perspectives are created, challenged and revised. Mezirow (1997) also described transformative learning as the "process of effecting change in a frame of reference" (p. 5). He further stated that at the heart of transformative learning is perspective transformation which he defined as:

> . . . a process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to construe the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; changing those structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 167)

Mezirow concluded, from his early research involving women who were participating in a college reentry program after being away from formal learning for an extended period, that the following ten phases are involved in the process of perspective transformation:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt and shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquisitions of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Building of competence and self confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 168)

Taylor (1997) found, "much support" for the proposed stages, in his review of the empirical studies of Mezirow's theory. Research has not determined that the process is linear, rather it has appeared to be spiraling in nature (Cranton, 2002; Taylor). Research has shown that the steps in the process do not follow an exact sequence (Taylor), however, there has appeared to be "some progression to it"(Cranton, 2000 as cited in Cranton, 2002, p. 65). Cranton elaborated by stating "We cannot critically reflect on an assumption until we are aware of it. We cannot engage in discourse on something we have not identified. We cannot change a habit of mind without thinking about it in some way" (p. 65). The research reviewed by Taylor, and others reviewed by Caffarella and Merriam (1999), expand on some of the factors involved in the process outlined by Mezirow. For example, Mezirow refers to a disorienting dilemma as a situation in which the learner experiences a crisis such as a job change, or the death of a loved one. Taylor stated that other studies found that integrating circumstances could also trigger transformation. "In contrast to the abrupt and dramatic appearance of the disorienting dilemma, the integrating

circumstance occurs after and seems to be the culmination of an earlier stage of exploration and searching . . . This is an 'indefinite period' in which the person consciously or unconsciously searches for something which is missing in their life; when they find this missing piece the transformational learning process is catalyzed" (Clark, 1993a' p. 81 as cited in Caffarella & Merriam,1999, p. 321). Cranton (1992) emphasized that perspective transformation can be "precipitated by challenging interactions with others (including an educator), by participation in carefully designed exercises and activities and by simulation through reading and visual materials" (p. 146). Cranton (2002) advocated that an educator can help trigger transformation by presenting other view points that are typically different than the views held by the learners.

In reviewing the literature, there appear to be three components that are critical to Mezirow's theory: the importance of experience, critical reflective and rational discourse, and action. Experience is vital to perspective transformation because that is the starting point (Cranton, 1992; Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997; Taylor,1998). The process begins with a learner who has developed, through life experiences, a set of assumptions about how the world works. Mezirow (1991) used the term – meaning perspective – to refer to "the structure of assumptions within one's past experience which assimilates and transforms new experience" (p. 42). As adults, we have "ways of seeing and understanding that we have acquired through socialization. . . and through our schooling" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). For instance, an individual may have grown up to view conflict as negative, "Adults generally have negative views of conflict and perceive conflict as causing diviseness, psychological distress and social disorder, even war . . ." (Johnson, Johnson, & Stevahn, 2002). Negative orientations toward conflict will influence individuals to use ineffective approaches when faced with a conflict situation (Fisher, Patton, &

Ury, 1991; Tjosvold, 1993; Weeks, 1998). Improving ability to manage conflict involves more than simply learning about conflict resolution approaches. The key is for learners to identify and challenge assumptions regarding conflict and conflict resolution and then to consider alternative approaches (Braman, 1998). Essentially adults have an existing repertoire of skills and strategies Adding more tools to their repertoire will help somewhat, yet the real and deeper professional development will involve examination of themselves and a thorough look at what they believe and why (Cranton & Sokol, 1998). This is the essence of perspective transformation. It is when the old way of doing is no longer producing the desired results that the person may begin to challenge his/her assumptions. "It is through engaging with life experience to make meaning that there is an opportunity for change in perspective" (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999, p. 320).

Critical reflection on the validity of one's assumptions is considered to be essential for perspective transformation (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Cranton, 1992; Imel, 1998; Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997; Taylor 1997, 1998). The reflection process may begin with someone simply thinking "I've never thought of conflict in that way." Most of the studies that Taylor (1997) reviewed concur with Mezirow's conviction that critical reflection is a significant factor in achieving perspective transformation. As Mezirow (1990) advocates, "by far the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical reflection, reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling and acting" (p. 13). However many of the studies reviewed by Taylor (1997), contend that there is an over reliance on rationality in Mezirow's theory. In addition, some of the findings suggested that a perspective transformation could occur in some individuals without critical reflection. Moreover, in the review, Taylor found that studies suggest that there can be non-rational and

unconscious modalities for revising meaning structures.

Rational discourse, which is part of the critical reflection stage, allows learners to openly discuss and challenge their beliefs with other people (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Mezirow, 1990,1991; Taylor, 1998). Discourse becomes the medium for critical reflection to be put into practice, where experience is reflected upon and assumptions and beliefs are questioned. (Taylor 2000). Mezirow (1991) stated that rational discourse allows participants to enter into an exchange of communicated ideas with others who are considered to be the "most informed, rational and objective" (p. 76). Facilitators can attempt to create the optional conditions for participating in rational discourse. These conditions involve participants (a) having accurate and complete information; (b) being free from coercion and distorting self-deception; (c) being able to weigh evidence and assess arguments; (d) being open to alternative perspectives; (e) critically reflecting upon presuppositions and their consequences; (f) having equal opportunity to participate; (g) being able to accept an informal, objective and rational consensus as a test of validity.

"Action is an integral and indispensable component of transformative learning" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 209). Cranton (1992) argues that action is evidence that a perspective transformation has occurred and that "transformative learning must include action" (p. 174). Bova and Pohland (2000), upon studying transformative learning as it relates to professional development, found "some evidence of action or planned action exists . . ." (p. 146). Mezirow (1990) stressed that action can take the form of "making a decision, making an association, revising a point of view, reframing or solving a problem, modifying an attitude, or producing a change in behavior" (p. 12). Transformative learning can also result in social action which may involve individuals taking action

to bring about "changes in relationships . . . changes in organizations . . . or changes in system" (p. 209). Once a person's perspective has been revised, the individual, according to transformative theory, will begin to think and act in a way that is in sync with the transformed perspective (Cranton, 1992, 2002; Mezirow 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997). For instance, if a conflict resolution training participant started her training with a negative view of conflict, but was able to revise her perspective to see conflict as an opportunity for improvement in which both parties work together to find solutions that are mutually beneficial, then she may apply the interest-based negotiating process with her teenage daughter rather than avoid the situation.

How is perspective transformation fostered in a classroom of adult learners? Taylor (2000) indicated that Mezirow suggests the following conditions would be necessary if transformation is to be fostered: "(a) establishing a sense of safety, openness and trust; (b) having access to accurate and complete information; (c) using instructional methods that promote a student-centered approach; and (d) exploring alternative perspectives through problem-solving and critical reflection" (p. 5). Other studies that Taylor reviewed concurred with Mezirow's ideal conditions for fostering transformative learning; however there were also other practices identified that were equally as important, they included "(a) fostering group ownership and individual agency; (b) providing intense shared experiential activities; (c) developing an awareness of personal and social contextual influences; (d) promoting value-laden course content; (e) recognizing the interrelationship of critical reflection and effective learning; (f) and the need for time" (p. 10).

Although there has been an increase in research surrounding transformational learning, much more needs to be done (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Cranton, 1992; Taylor, 1997, 1998).

One area that has had little attention is the "definitional outcome of a perspective transformation" (Taylor, 1998, p. 48). If a person experiences a change in their perspective what impact does that have on his/her life? Once the adult leaves the formal setting of the classroom, as in the case with conflict resolution training, what happens?

Conflict Resolution Training for Adults

Even though there are many opportunities available for adults who wish to receive conflict resolution training, there appears to be a paucity of relevant research regarding the impact of such training on adult learners. There has been a significant amount of research conducted on the effectiveness of conflict resolution training within elementary, middle and senior high school systems. Deutsch (2000) stated that, "there is now much evidence from the school systems of the positive effects of conflict resolution training on the students who were trained" (p. 583). One such study (Johnson, Johnson, & Stevahn, 2002) did catch my attention because the study focused on examining the effectiveness of a conflict resolution training program that advocated a conflict resolution process similar to the one taught at CCRS. The study found that (1) "unless students are specifically trained they may never learn how to resolve conflicts effectively" (p. 323) and (2) the trained students used the "integrative problem-solving" strategy of conflict resolution that they had learned in both artificial conflict situations and role plays as well in real conflict situations, rather than resorting to past behaviors such as " forcing (to get one's way), withdrawing (to avoid confrontation) or smoothing (to satisfy the other person)" (p. 323). The study also examined changes in attitudes toward conflict. At the beginning of the study, researchers determined that most students had "formulated negative attitudes towards conflict . . ." (p. 325). The researchers

concluded, after the study, that although attitudes toward conflict were highly resistant to change, those students who did receive the conflict resolution training indicated that their attitudes had in fact changed. "Viewing conflict as positive may (help to) increase the likelihood that conflicts are sought, faced and valued rather than ignored and valued" (p. 325). Johnson et al. (2002) also stressed that more research should explore the impact of [conflict resolution training] . . . on unstudied populations" (p. 329).

Conflict resolution training has been found to be very effective with employees of a large urban prison system (Shuford & Spenser, 1999). An independent study was conducted on the training system which involved two levels of training: a "basic level for staff and of all ranks and an advanced level for supervisory personnel" (p. 98). The evaluation indicated that of the 97% of staff who took the training, 69 % felt that it was excellent and 28 % rated the training as good. Prison officials stated that communication between units expanded and improved. "Every one has benefitted from the experience of participating in conflict resolution training" (p. 98). Although the initial objectives of the training were to improve communications and conflict resolution skills so that teamwork, morale, and productivity would improve, a follow up evaluation, conducted six months after the initial training, indicated that "the skills learned are just as useful with inmates and with family and friends . . . 71 percent of the staff who had taken the training reported using the skills with inmates . . . 84 percent were using them with co-workers, 75 percent with supervisors, and 87 percent were using them with family or friends" (p. 98).

Palmer and Roessler (2000) studied " the effects of an eight hour training program in self advocacy and conflict resolution skills designed to help college students with disabilities request classroom accommodations" (p. 38). The Self Advocacy and Conflict Resolution Training

(SACR) involved two modules of training: one on self advocacy and communication skills and one on conflict resolution through negotiation. In the second module "participants (a) observed a module using principled negotiation skills (Fisher & Ury, 1981), (b) applied these skills in an assortment of conflict situation and (c) role played negotiation skills with training faculty and other staff" (p. 39). The study found that the students who had taken the SACR training had "significantly increased their self advocacy and conflict resolution skills and thus were better prepared to satisfy their classroom accommodations needs" (p. 142). In addition, trained participants "were perceived by post-secondary educators as significantly more competent in . . . resolving differences of opinion in the determination of reasonable accommodations" (p. 42). It is important to note that this study involved observations of participants engaged in role play situations.

Stern (2000) discussed the results of a study, conducted to assess the impact of conflict (anger) management training combined with conflict resolution training. The quantitative study involved 18 parent-adolescent dyads, some of who received conflict resolution (CR) training and some who received a combined treatment of conflict resolution and conflict management (CM) training. Stern distinguished between CR and CM. "The conflict management component was designed to address the affective and cognitive components of parent-adolescent conflict . . . the goal of the conflict management component was better anger management rather than problem-solving (p. 184)". The results of the studies indicated that both types of training assisted parents and teens to significantly improve their communication and problem solving skills which "reduced conflict at home" (p. 181). The parents and teens who received the anger management component were "able to manage their anger significantly better than those who had received the conflict

resolution training alone" (p. 181). Parents and teens in both conditions reported that they had experienced a change in perspective toward conflict.

Another study, conducted by Davidson and Versluys (1999) focused on evaluating the effectiveness of conflict resolution training workshops designed for adults. Their findings indicated that even brief courses (1 to 2 hours in length) could have positive outcomes. "It has been demonstrated that participants trained in a shortened conflict resolution program are significantly more likely to produce win-win outcomes than those untrained and that this outcome is enhanced by training in both cooperation skills and problem-solving skills" (p. 140).

These afore-mentioned studies have indicated that conflict resolution training can be effective in helping people to view conflict differently and to approach conflict resolution in a problem-solving manner, at least in a controlled setting such as a classroom; however research needs to extend beyond the classroom to other social contexts (Deutsch, 2000). Moreover, research is needed that focuses on participants' abilities to apply effective conflict resolution skills in real-life situations (Palmer & Roessler, 2000).

This review of relevant literature illustrates that significant research has been conducted in the field of adult learning, particularly in the areas of adult characteristics, adult learning transaction and perspective transformation. In addition, much has been written about strategies for facilitating adult learning in the classroom. With regard to conflict resolution training, much has been written in relation to the public school system. A few studies have highlighted the effectiveness of conflict resolution training in controlled settings. Overall, the literature supports the need for a study that explores the experience of adult learners who have engaged in conflict resolution training.

This study addresses the apparent gaps with regard to how participation in conflict resolution training impacts on the lives of participants. This study includes only adult participants and focuses on a program that meets many of the conditions advocated by the andragogical model. Moreover, it explores the process of perspective transformation in the context of conflict resolution training and it elaborates on the impact of perspective transformation on the lives of participants. In addition the study goes beyond the classroom to understand how the participants applied their training to their daily lives.

CHAPTER III
Research Design and Methodology

Overall Design and Rationale

In this research study, the intention was to explore participants' experiences as a result of their participation in at least 105 hours of training (the equivalent of five workshops in the certificate program) at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies and to discover what, if any, impact this training has had on their personal and/or professional lives. Patton (1990) states that "qualitative methods are particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive knowledge" (p. 44). Lamm (1998) asserts that both Mezirow and Brookfield have suggested that qualitative rather than quantitative research methods be applied, if a research study is exploring transformative learning. Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggest that:

> For a study focusing on individuals' lived experiences, the researcher could argue that one cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning participants attribute to those actions–their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds; the researcher therefore, needs to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interactions. (p. 57)

A phenomenological inquiry is an appropriate genre of qualitative research for this study because it "focuses on the question 'What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?'" (Patton, 1990, p. 69). In addition, "a phenomenological perspective can mean . . . a focus on what people experience and how they interpret the world" (p. 70).

Data-Collection Method

In this research study, the aim was to explore individuals' perceptions and experiences;

therefore, I decided that the most effective way to collect the data would be through in-depth, face-to-face interviews. As Patton (1990) stated:

> We interview people to find out from them what we cannot directly observe . . . . We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time . . . We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world . . . The purpose of interviews then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p.278)

I combined a standardized open-ended interview approach with an interview guide. The open-ended interview approach involved asking the participants a series of basic questions that were pre-determined before the interviews. The guide allowed me to be open to asking probing questions when appropriate. At first, I considered only a standardized open-ended interview approach since its purpose, as Patton (1990) describes "is to minimize interviewer effects by asking the same question of each respondent" (p. 285). I believed that the standardized open-ended approach would offer many benefits. It would allow me to address issues of legitimacy and credibility by ensuring that the same basic information was collected from each participant. The standardized approach would also help me to analyse the data in that I would be able to examine specific questions, while also permitting me to organize questions and answers that related to similar topics. Although I wanted to take advantage of the strengths of the open-ended interview approach, I did not want to be limited. I wanted to have the flexibility of using "different lines of questioning with different people, based on their unique experiences" (p. 286). To build upon the strengths of the standardized open-ended interview approach while minimizing the limitations, I combined the approach with the use of an interview guide (see Appendix C). This choice gave me more "flexibility in probing and more decision-making flexibility" (p. 287) when I wanted to explore participants' answers more fully.

Each of the 7 individuals, who participated in the study, participated in an interview that lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The interviews were scheduled at the interviewees' convenience. Five of the participants chose to have the interviews conducted at their offices. Two interviews were conducted in my home, at the request of the participants.

The goal of the interviews was to encourage participants to express and describe, in their own words, their experience of participating in conflict resolution training and the impact that the experience had on their lives. Having been a director of human resources and an adult educator, I have developed strong interview skills and overall interpersonal skills. I have demonstrated the ability to engage people in conversations about themselves, by taking a sincere interest in learning about their thoughts, opinions and perspectives, and by attentively listening to what they have had to say. I have really enjoyed listening to other people tell their "stories." All of these strengths helped me to put the interviewees at ease and allowed me to explore their experiences with an open-mind.

Site and Population Selection

The site for the study was the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies (CCRS) at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). Entry to the site had been granted by the director of the CCRS. When choosing a site for my study I chose the CCRS for the following reasons:

1. The participants of the various courses and the certificate program are working professionals in different careers;
2. The courses are non credited, and are structured in terms of workshops rather than semesters;

3. Participants choose among the 29 courses offered so they can receive customized training that suits their individual needs;
4. The topic, conflict resolution, is not job or career specific, rather it is very generic in that it applies to every facet of life. Conflict resolution applies to personal, educational, community and workplace settings;
5. The courses in the program are individualized in nature and the outcomes of participation in various courses will be different for different learners;
6. It is an adult education program.

Originally, I had planned to limit my sample selection to those individuals who had graduated from the certificate program; however, the certificate program, at the time of my research, had only been in existence for just under 3 years. Since participants proceeded at their own paces, usually on a part-time basis, only 12 individuals had achieved their certificate. I was concerned that this small population could create confidentiality issues, therefore, I decided to invite students who have completed at least five courses through the CCRS, to participate in the study.

I prepared an information package for each of the 42 individuals whom the CCRS had on file as having completed at least five courses. The CCRS wanted to maintain the confidentiality of its participants and was not in a position to give me the mailing addresses of these individuals; instead, I gave the centre the 42 packages and they in turn mailed them to the participants. The packages included a "Statement of Informed Consent" (see Appendix D), a Letter of Explanation/Invitation" (see Appendix E) and a "Participant Response Form" (see Appendix F).

The participants were asked to complete the "Participant Response Form" and, if they were interested in participating in the study, the "Statement of Informed Consent." They were also requested to return the documents in a self-addressed stamped envelope which I had provided in the packages.

I received 15 responses from the mail-out. Of those responses, 6 individuals indicated that they were not interested in participating in the study. Of the 9 individuals who had indicated an interest in being a participant on the study, I was only able to gain a commitment from 7 people to participate in the face-to-face interviews, which were an integral component of the study. Those 7 people participated in the study.

The participant sample included 2 males and 5 females. The participants' occupations represented both public and private practice. From a professional standpoint, some were managers or were self-employed while others represented front-line occupations. On a personal level, the participants had a variety of living situations. Some participants were married, some divorced, and some were single. Some participants did mention as well, that they had children.

Data Management Strategies

I employed strategies to help me ensure that "the data will be recorded efficiently and managed in ways that allow for easy retrieval" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 147).

Patton (1990) emphasized that during the data recording process, the purpose of interviews "is to record as fully and fairly as possible that particular interviewee's perspective" (p. 348). I wanted to capture each participant's actual words, therefore each interviewee was asked if the interview could be tape recorded so that nothing during the conversation was missed. Even

though the interviews were taped, I took basic notes, in a notebook, during and after the interviews. These notes guided me during the interview as well as assisted me with analysis. The interview tapes were transcribed and participant verbatim language was captured.

The transcribed interview notes were kept on two discs. One of the discs was considered a master and was stored in a separate location to protect the data from possible damage. The other disc was my working copy. I also had two hard copies of each of the transcribed interviews. Patton (1990) suggests that "once a copy is put away for safekeeping, there remains one complete copy to use throughout the analysis, one copy for writing on and one or more copies for cutting and pasting" (p. 310). When not in use, tapes from the interviews and transcribed notes, were kept in a locked cabinet.

Data Analysis Strategies

I began the process of analyzing the data immediately after I had completed the interviews. I first listened to each tape to ensure that the entire interview had been recorded. The tapes were then transcribed. I re-read each transcript in its entirety to gain a general sense of each interview. I then began the coding process.

I began coding the transcripts by question. To help make the data more manageable, I created separate files for each question and interview segment. In each file, I then copied the corresponding responses from each transcript. I chose to use inductive analysis which means "that categories and patterns emerge from the data rather than being imposed on the data prior to data collection" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 502). I re-read the responses in each file, with the purpose of generating categories, themes and patterns. Using a hard copy version of the files, I

made notes of the specific codes for each question. I also kept track of the specific codes in a research journal. Depending on the question, I had between 2 and 20 codes. I then amalgamated the codes to form categories which led to the development of specific themes. I rearranged the codes to determine if there were additional themes; however I found that my original categories most accurately reflected the results. In addition to the detailed coding of each question, I made note of recurring items throughout all questions; these notes became the basis of the common themes of the study.

Trustworthiness Features

With respect to establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1985) emphasized that the basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple:

> How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue. (p. 290)

There are four constructs of trustworthiness for qualitative research, as proposed by Guba and Lincoln; these are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to "the 'truth' of the findings of a particular inquiry . . ." (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 290). Transferability addresses the "extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)" (p. 290). Dependability is concerned with the stability of data over time and the degree to which a study can be "replicated with the same (or similar) respondents in the same (or similar) context" (p. 290). Confirmability addresses "the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and the

conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer" (p. 290). In this section, I have outlined the actions taken to increase the trustworthiness of this study.

My experience as a director of human resources, adult educator and facilitator, as well as my personal commitment to professional development, supported my credibility as a researcher for this study. I have gained basic knowledge of the CCRS as a result of conversations with the director and some of the facilitators. I have completed a number of professional and personal development workshops that have included components relating to conflict resolution and I have taken courses in human resource development and educational research.

To strengthen the credibility of the research itself, I employed a number of strategies. I tape-recorded each interview. The interview tapes were transcribed and careful attention was given to ensure verbatim language was captured. The subsequent transcripts were then sent to the participants for verification. I asked each participant to review their transcripts and to provide their thoughts and suggestions for changes, in the margins of the transcripts. Each participant was also asked to complete a "Verification Form" (see Appendix G). All participants verified the transcripts and aside from correcting basic grammatical errors, none of them indicated any suggestions for changes. I strove to reduce researcher bias through discussions with my graduate peers, my thesis advisor, and the second reader on my thesis committee. I also looked for rival and competing themes and explanations within the data. "Inductively it involves looking for other ways of organizing the data that might lead to different findings" (Patton, 1990, p. 462). I searched for negative cases in the data by considering the instances and cases that did not fit.

To address transferability, I have provided information-rich descriptions of my findings. In

the presentation of my findings, I have included numerous participant verbatim quotes to support each theme in the attempt ". . .to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 316).

To ensure the dependability of my research, I kept a journal of the decisions and choices that I made throughout the research. I included an account in my journal of, "any changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study" (Patton, 1990, p. 463).

Some of the strategies, such as keeping a reflective journal, engaging in peer-debriefing sessions, and having participants verify their transcripts, addressed issues of trustworthiness and also addressed the issue of confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

Before I began my study, I obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Prince Edward Island. I made certain to respect the time that the participants volunteered, by limiting my contact with them to the interviews and the subsequent mail-outs of the transcripts for verification. I revealed the research purpose to all participants. I treated each participant ethically by ensuring informed consent and by protecting participant anonymity. Each participant was given a consent form to review and sign. The form outlined the nature of the study, the volunteer aspect of participation and the opportunity to withdraw, the level of commitment required from participants, and how their input would used. I made it clear, both in the consent form and in my discussions with potential participants, that their identity would be protected. Moreover I used pseudonyms when referring to individual participants in my written

report and I will do so in my oral defense as well. Since I have a slight case of cerebral palsy that affects my right side, it was not efficient for me to do the typing; therefore, with each individual participant's permission, I contracted PEI Office of the Future to complete the transcripts of the interviews. The employees working on the transcripts were not provided with participants' identities.

CHAPTER IV
Findings

In the following chapter, the findings are organized by interview question or segment. In presenting the findings, I found that using pseudonyms made the findings more personal and enabled the voices of the participants to be heard. In an effort to help the reader keep track of each participant's story, I have included summary tables. These tables highlight which participants' responses reflect the emergent themes. To support the findings, I have provided verbatim quotes from each participant. In other cases, however, it was not efficient to include all quotes, therefore I have, at times, chosen to include one or more quotes that illustrate the emergent theme being discussed. A brief introduction of the 7 participants precedes the findings. Following the descriptions of the responses, are the common or general themes that emerged.

Introduction of Participants

During the interview, I did not ask specific questions regarding demographics; however throughout the course of the conversations, I was able to learn some background information on each of the participants. Careful attention was given to protecting the identities of the participants; therefore, the following introductions are very brief.

Mary, at the time of the interview, worked as a project manager in an educational setting. She was recently married. She did not indicate whether or not she had children. Cathy worked in the public sector. Most of her responsibility related directly to conflict resolution in the workplace. She is married and has at least two children. Peter was in a management capacity within the public sector. He stated that he was married and had two teenage children, a son and a

daughter. Allison worked in a educational setting in a management position. She did not make reference to her marital status during the interview nor did she mention that she had any children. Phil was self employed within the private sector. He was married and had four teenage children. Heather, when she began her studies, worked in a public service department that handled workplace conflict issues. At the time of the interview, she was in a new administrative support position in a different department. She was divorced and had two teenage daughters. Peggy worked in a management capacity within the public sector. She was also self-employed. She was married. She had mentioned that she has children, however I do not know any particulars.

Reasons for Involvement

Participants were first asked how they became involved in conflict resolution studies. All of the participants described a professional motivation for enrolling in conflict resolution training; one participant also indicated that her reason for taking training in this area grew out of a "personal commitment to social justice." Two of the participants, at the time of enrollment, were working in departments that dealt specifically with workplace conflict resolution. Two others explained that they were self-employed in the field of mediation and general conflict resolution. Two people specifically mentioned that they had a desire to develop greater conflict resolution skills in order to improve their performance at work. For instance, Peter indicated that one of his motivations for beginning his studies was that, "I really saw an opportunity to perhaps take my education in a direction where you [sic] could help resolve conflict."

As a point of interest, 3 of the 7 interviewees stated that their original plan was not to pursue the certificate program. They were simply interested in taking one or two courses, but

once they became involved, their interest in the field grew and they decided to continue their studies.

Perceptions Before Training

The second question involved exploring the perceptions that participants held toward conflict and conflict resolution, prior to their training. The emergent themes, from the responses to this question, focussed on both negative and positive perspectives toward conflict prior to training.

The following table highlights the participants' responses, in terms of the emergent themes, relating to their prior perceptions of and reactions to conflict prior, to their training:

Table 1 *

Overview of Participant Responses Regarding Perceptions of and Reactions to Conflict Prior to Training

Participant	Perceptions	Reactions/Workplace	Reactions/Home Life
Mary	Negative	● Accommodated other party	● Avoided conflict
Cathy	Somewhat positive	● Sought ways to resolve; ● Tried to stay out of others's disputes	● Responded emotionally
Peter	Negative	● Sought ways to resolve	● Approached conflict in a constructive way
Allison	Neutral	● Tried to stay out of others's disputes	● Avoided conflict
Phil	Negative- depended on situation	● Sought ways to resolve	● Avoided conflict
Heather	Negative	● Became defensive	● Responded emotionally
Peggy	Negative	● Sought ways to resolve conflicts with clients ● Avoided conflict with peers or employees	● Responded emotionally in conflicts with spouse ● Approached conflict with children constructively

* Upon request of the thesis committee, all of the tables have been customized, contrary to APA guidelines, in an effort to improve readability.

Four of the participants described conflict in a negative light. Peter, for instance stated that he, "really would see conflict as a lot of negative energy being expended and perhaps not resulting in anything positive." Heather responded that, ". . . to me conflict was something negative . . . there's a winner and there's a loser. That it is just something that's bad." Mary referred to a "fear of conflict" in her response. Peggy stated that her perception could be described as negative, " not something I really liked to deal with." Phil said that his perception of conflict varied depending on the situation.

> If I was in it, I didn't like it very much . . . the time I thought that it was just, that I found negotiating for myself very uncomfortable, just because I was tired of doing it, because you do it five days a week . . . you're out there arguing someone else's case. The last thing you want to do is spend time arguing your own . . . I didn't feel I had the energy to fight battles for me. (Phil, interview)

Conversely, both Phil and Cathy spoke about conflict and conflict resolution in a positive way. Phil indicated that if he was not a direct party in the conflict he was very comfortable with helping others resolve their conflicts. Cathy described her perception as being "open and receptive" and she "always tried to sit down and talk thing out." Interestingly, however, Cathy and Phil, when later asked about whether their perception had changed, both indicated that their perception was now "not as negative" as it had been. Allison didn't specify what her perception of conflict was, however, in a way similar to Cathy and Phil, she did indicate that she would "try to resolve it in some way." She also mentioned that she had "known for years that some conflict is good and some is bad."

Prior Reactions to Conflict in the Workplace

When asked to describe their typical reaction to conflict in the workplace, prior to their training, participant responses varied. The responses related to: (a) seeking ways to resolve conflict, (b) not becoming involved in other people's disputes, (c) resorting to avoidance or accommodating modes of conflict resolution, and finally, (d) becoming defensive in conflict situations.

Four people indicated that when they were faced with a conflict, prior to their training, they would have taken steps to resolve the conflict, if they were directly involved. For instance, Cathy stated, "I would ask if we could talk about it, some way in order to be able to resolve it,

whether it be sitting down quietly or going away from the office or just offering different perspectives to try and look at it rationally." Similarly, Peter explained, "if you've got a problem with someone you should make them aware that you have a problem." He further explained that he would handle a conflict by "identify [sic] the problem, getting it clear in my head what the problem is, and then setting a time and place where you could approach the individual and make them aware of the problem."

Two participants mentioned that if they witnessed a conflict happening between other colleagues, they would try and stay out of it since they were not directly involved; although one person did mention that she might offer advice if she knew someone well and felt that the conflict may be "destroying morale."

Mary described herself as having been very accommodating in conflict situations. She would anticipate what the other person would want or what their interests would be and then seek ways to accommodate. She elaborated by explaining that she didn't always come forward with her view points but rather accommodated the other person. With this approach she also realized that she was trying to avoid having the conflict erupt further. Peggy responded to the questions by saying "avoid it as much as possible" . . . she would hope that "it would just go away." Peggy did say that her avoidance of conflict took place in situations that involved peers or other employees.

Although Peggy mentioned that she would have a tendency to avoid conflicts in some situations, she seemed to respond differently with clients. In these situations, she was "...kind of used to it, to get at the issue . . . I was quite comfortable doing that." That component of Peggy's response paralleled Phil's experience with his clients. He explained that "conflict was a problem to

be solved . . . you had to get the other party on side and find a resolution that would work for everybody".

Heather explained that her initial reaction to a conflict, particularly in a situation where she perceived someone as saying something negative or critical towards her, would be to "get on the defensive and take it personally." She would then "just attack . . . not even think about what's being said . . . not stop and think. Just right away react."

Previous Reactions to Conflict in Personal/Home Life

The next question I asked was, "Before you began actively learning about conflict and conflict resolution, how would you describe your typical reaction to conflict and your approach to conflict and conflict resolution in your home/personal life?" This question elicited various responses from the participants. The three themes that emerged from the data centered around: (a) avoidance tendencies, (b) emotional responses, and (c) constructive responses.

Both Allison and Phil referred to their past tendencies to avoid conflict. Allison explained that she would, "shy away from it." Phil said that, "if someone else could deal with it .... They would deal with it. . . .shopping, returning things, dealing with stores and all that kind of stuff, I hated doing . . . " He explained that he would have his spouse handle those conflict situations.

The other approach that was common was characterized by an emotional response to conflict. Cathy's response to this question was:

> In family situations perhaps it's a more emotional approach and you feel more strongly about things because you're either protective of your children or you're protective of the relationships . . . quicker to react . . . people who know you well such as your family or your close friends, know how to push your buttons a little better than people who you only have an interfacing with a few hours of the day. (Cathy, interview)

Cathy went on to give an example that involves her teenage daughter. "She knows how to push my buttons and does it very well, and before I started learning about conflict management and those kinds of things, she and I would constantly be at loggerheads about things. . .". Another interviewee, Peggy, explained that her approach could be described as a "much more of a defensive mode when you're dealing with your spouse." Heather described her typical reaction to conflict as "defensive and really short, blunt." She could also become "accusing" when faced with a conflict situation in her home life.

Two participants believed that they were able to approach some personal conflicts in an constructive manner, prior to their training. When speaking about his relationship with his spouse and children, Peter stated that he and his family have tried to make communication a priority. He explained it this way:

> You create an opportunity for a time where you both can communicate and then share the experience and when you do that, it also builds the relationship as well . . . trying to, I guess, identify the misunderstandings, identifying why there's a misunderstanding, respect on both sides being there at the table, and a real commitment to each other and to the family is what we work on as a family. (Peter, interview)

Peggy stated that unlike the defensive response she might have with her spouse, she felt that:

> It's probably easier to deal with conflict, I think, with children . . . A person doesn't tend to get confrontational, I don't think, as much with children . . . It was always interesting to find out where the conflict was coming from with the children and to delve into what's happening and try to get to the bottom of it. (Peggy, interview)

Perception Changes

When asked if they have noticed a change in their perspective toward conflict, all 7 of the participants indicated that they have perceived a change. When I asked them to elaborate upon

the change, most of the responses fell into one of three common themes: conflict resolution styles, opportunities for change and improved communication. The following table outlines their perception changes with regard to conflict and the factors that contributed to the changes:

Table II

Overview of Participants' Perception Change

Participant	Experienced a Change	Description	Contributing Factors
Mary	Yes	● Recognizes and appreciates conflict resolution styles	● Self assessment tools ● Application of skills ● Change in marital status
Cathy	Yes	● Recognizes and appreciates conflict resolution styles ● Views conflict as an opportunity for change	● Self assessment tools
Peter	Yes	● Has improved communication skills	● Role plays
Allison	Yes	● Has improved communication skills	● Role plays ● Small group discussions ● Self reflection
Phil	Yes	● Views conflict as an opportunity for change	● Small group discussions ● Self reflection ● Application of skills
Heather	Yes	● Has improved communication skills	● Self assessment tools ● Small group discussion
Peggy	Yes	● Has improved communication skills	● Application of skills ● Self assessment tools

Both Cathy and Mary stated that they have gained a better appreciation of the different styles of conflict resolution covered in the Thomas Killman assessment tool. Mary said that she feels more confident in, "recognizing patterns in my own behavior, recognizing tendencies and

patterns in others' behaviors as well." Mary indicated that prior to the training she would have kept her thoughts to herself to avoid a conflict or to accommodate another person; as a result of the training she has grown to see her role and herself differently. She explained that she had become more aware of her role in conflict resolution:

> I am more self critical too of my responsibility in conflict because I think, as an accommodater, I would feel like I'm open and flexible and I'm really trying to work with the situation; but I wasn't working with the situation because I wasn't putting all of my internal information on the table, so my self perception has changed there. I feel more responsibility when there's conflict. The other person has responsibility too but accommodating other people is not helping conflict. (Mary, interview)

Cathy and Phil both indicated that they see conflict as an opportunity for change. Cathy said, "I realize now that conflict is an opportunity for learning. It's an opportunity to create new ways of doing things or new relationships or new challenges to overcome. I put a different angle of light on it rather than looking for the negative spot." She further elaborated by describing an activity that she has used during delivery of dispute resolution training within her organization:

> I take a blank piece of paper and I put a blank dot in it and I ask people what they see and they'll all say that they see the black dot, and I always ask, but in relationship to the size of the paper, where it's all white, it's pure, why do we always zone in on that black dot. And that was the awakening for me . . . saying there are good things that can come out of this (conflict) and we can work to that. (Cathy, interview)

When describing a change in his perspective toward conflict, Phil stated, "I'm far more comfortable in dealing with my own things on a personal level; I see it as an opportunity for changing how things are done, for improvement . . . changes your whole perspective, the training does . . . it's a learning experience."

The other common theme, which was mentioned by 4 participants, focused on improved communication. Allison, Peggy and Heather have found that their changes in perspective, with regard to conflict, have allowed them to be able to stop and reflect before responding to a conflict

situation. They seek to understand the situation first. Peggy described the new approach as, " you just take a breather to see what's driving it (the conflict), to try and be more prepared to inquire more, be more inquisitive in terms of letting people just kind of vent and try to get to the bottom of it a little easier. . ." Heather explained that, "I try to analyze things before I retort." So when someone tells me something or accuses me of something, I'll stop and think what it means and what exactly it is that they are saying." To help her strengthen her skills she has enlisted the help of her children. "I've taught them how to talk to me in a way that I won't get defensive, so I will listen to what they're saying and analyze. . ." Allison described her current view of and approach to conflict: "It's a question of understanding it a little bit more. . . how did it happen, what might have been the root cause of it, how could we have done this a bit differently. I try to bring it out in people. . . reframing is so important . . .What is it that upsets you or how did you feel when this happened?" Peter stressed that he seeks to better understand a situation by "identifying the issues." He also believes that he has gained a stronger appreciation for the importance of listening in resolving conflicts:

> I think the old saying goes: two eyes, two ears and one mouth, so you should get twice as much out of your eyes and ears than you do your mouth and taking that approach to things. That you listen, observe and when you do that and minimize the amount you talk, I think you can help with conflict. (Peter, interview)

Moreover, Peter emphasized that an eye opener for him was to realize that people can hold very different meanings toward words. "And just taking time to ensure that the words we're using and what meaning we want to pass on is actually being picked up. . ."

In addition to learning about the specific perspective changes experienced by the interviewees, I wanted to explore whether anything in particular contributed to the participants' changes in perspective. I asked the participants when they first noticed a change in perspective

and what, if anything, was taking place. Everyone indicated that the perspective change took place gradually as they progressed through the courses.

Two themes emerged which described what was encouraging the changes in perspective: skills development and application and self-assessment. Both Peter and Allison made reference to the role plays that were used either in the courses and during the final assessment. Allison, Heather and Phil also indicated that the small group discussions were very useful in helping them to reflect and apply what they were learning. For instance, Allison explained, "I sort of conjured up situations that happened . . . If I had dealt with it like this, it might not have happened the way it did or it might have resolved itself differently. Phil indicated that his perception change started to occur after he started developing the skills. "I think you learn first and then your attitude changes as a result of having new knowledge and skills." Peggy mentioned that her perspective change started to happen as she developed her conflict resolution skills and was able to apply them successfully at work.

Cathy, Heather, Peggy and Mary felt that their perspective change was impacted by the different self assessment tools that were used in a number of courses. They all explained that the Thomas- Killman Conflict Management-of-Differences or the MODE instrument, which was described in the introduction of this study, focused on specific styles of conflict resolution, helped them to understand and gain a new perspective toward the different approaches to conflict resolution and how they and other people approach conflict resolution. Similarly, the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator that they completed encouraged them to explore and examine their natural tendencies and how these tendencies impact on conflict resolution. Gaining an understanding of how they behave and an appreciation for other people's tendencies and

personalities was a very common theme throughout the findings.

Mary contributed a somewhat different view. Interestingly she felt that a change in her personal life, in addition to her strengthened skills, impacted upon her views toward conflict and her approach to conflict resolution. "I'm married now where I wasn't before . . . the security of a marriage commitment . . . I feel a greater freedom and confidence in this relationship that I hadn't experienced previously."

Professional Impact and Workplace Conflict

This segment of the interview involved numerous questions relating to participants' experience, in a professional sense, with conflict resolution. It also explored how they believed the training has affected them professionally. The following table outlines participants' responses in terms of professional impact of training, the types of conflicts experienced at work, current approaches to workplace conflict and opinions on whether their behavior has changed as a result of the conflict resolution training:

Table III

Impact of Training on Professional Lives and Workplace Conflict

Participant	Professional impact	Current Conflict Situation	Current Approaches	Perceived Differences
Mary	● Enhanced career and self-employment opportunities ● Improved performance	● Peers ● Work groups	● Communicating effectively	Yes
Cathy	● Enhanced career and self-employment opportunities ● Improved performance ● Opportunities to train others	● Peers ● Work groups	● Communicating effectively ● Coaching others	Similar behavior
Peter	● Successful workplace applications ● Opportunities to train others	● Clients ● Employees	● Communicating effectively ● Using CR process	Yes
Allison	● Improved performance ● Opportunities to train others ● Enhanced career opportunities	● Employees	● Communicating effectively	Yes
Phil	● Enhanced self-employment opportunities ● Improved performance	● Clients	● Communicating effectively ● using CR process	Not able to compare current with past behavior
Heather	● Improved performance ● Successful workplace applications	● Peers	● Communicating effectively	Yes
Peggy	● Improved performance ● Increased level of comfort ● Successful workplace applications	● Clients ● Employees	● Communicating effectively ● Coaching of others ● Using CR process	Yes

When participants were asked how their participation in conflict resolution courses affected them professionally, five themes emerged from the responses. The themes centered around: (a) career opportunities and self employment, (b) improved performance, (c) increased

self confidence, (d) workplace applications and (e) the training of others in conflict resolution.

Responses from 4 of the participants related to career opportunities and self-employment Cathy indicated that the training "made a defining moment for me that this is the path I wanted to take . . . I can channel my energies and do something good with what I'm learning." She reported "I've seriously given consideration to branching out on my own and becoming independent and acting as either a consultant or on an ad hoc basis." She said that "I've branched out and shared with other federal organizations and have actually been included in some of their selection processes for dispute resolution advisors and mediators. She indicated that she is building a network of contacts in the field so she can feel more secure in leaving a relatively secure job to pursue self-employment "I'm not ready to let go of the string until I kind of have that bit of cushion." Mary indicated that the training has impacted her career, and as well "it's definitely expanded employment opportunities . . . also expanded the areas in which I would be qualified to work." She has found that there are job opportunities that require specific training in conflict resolution. Phil has gone into business for himself in the field of mediation and he feels that the training is helping him to build his business "I think it [the training] adds credibility to my business, to my new career. It also adds a different level of comfort . . . in marketing my skills. . . . to be able to say that it is not just a track record of being able to do this [mediation] or having been successful in actual meditations for parties, but that the training and the whole package is there."

Improved performance was a significant theme which emerged from 6 of the 7 participant's responses. Allison stated "I deal with people differently now . . . I work with the staff quite differently." She now works with her staff in setting priorities and she has changed her expectations toward her staff. As a result, the workplace dynamic has shifted. "I think it has been

a better working environment within our little group." Cathy has been able to improve not only her performance, but she has been able to make a positive contribution to her workplace. "It [the training] has given me lots of opportunity to share what I've been learning. I've also been very instrumental in helping implement what's been taking place, as far as our organization introducing our dispute resolution system . . ." Mary described her improved performance as "much more successful in pulling any project off . . .". Peggy has experienced success in applying her conflict resolution skills in her private practice to help clients express themselves: "I think in particular of . . . some fairly resistant clientele who had been referred to me for consultation and some of the techniques of conflict resolution were very helpful in terms of being able to draw out what the real issue was in terms of their feelings." Heather simply stated, "I was able to do the job I was in." As was mentioned earlier, she had been in a position that dealt directly with workplace conflict resolution. She later continued her response by saying that "the skills that I learned have affected me personally which has enabled me to perform better at work." When asked to elaborate she said, "Well, being more open to criticism, being able to respond to people with a conflict with another, with a coworker, supervisor... I have the skills, I can work toward resolving the conflict." Phil described his improved performance: "It has made me more efficient and capable of mediating disputes to a successful conclusion."

Mary and Peggy both referred to confidence or comfort in their responses. Mary stated that, "I feel a lot more confident in my approach to work and the ability to get the job done." Peggy explained that she is "more comfortable with conflict" and understands the "dynamics of it [conflict] a bit better."

Participants have reported that they have taken what they had learned in the classroom and

have applied the learning to their workplace settings. Peggy stated that, "it [the training] gave me patience to kind of use the process and let it go . . . you don't have to fix things or force things, that if you set the situation up. . . . those kinds of issues just surface." She also stated that she had found that her clients respond very well to the process she uses. "They get comfort . . . they don't feel challenged or don't feel pressured . . . they have much more control over it . . . I think that certainly adds to their comfort." Peter also mentioned the "process." He indicated that he has a "better understanding that there is a process and if you follow the process it generally leads to success." In response to a later interview question, Peter provided the following example of how he applied what he had learned during his training to create a successful outcome in his work. The situation involved Peter being asked to work with a client who had been having a long-standing, significant dispute with a provincial government department and various other interest groups. The dispute had escalated over the years, " . . . over the 10 or 12 years, there were scud missiles thrown on either side. . . ." Peter explained that his discussions with the gentleman moved from a climate of mistrust to one of collaboration.

> We had a meeting and we started talking about [the dispute] and he had his legal counsel there as well. And as we started our negotiations, our discussions, if you want, there seemed to be a level of trust that developed. He would ask me to do something or provide him with some information and I would. And the way we approached that negotiation is that I had identified probably somewhere around 12 to 15 players that had [an interest in the conflict]. . . . And I brought them together in a boardroom over this and we talked about [the conflict], the significance of [the conflict]. (Peter, interview)

Peter proceeded with the story by explaining that the different groups with whom the gentleman was in conflict, were all given an opportunity to express their interests. Peter was then able to meet with the gentleman with a better appreciation of the different parties' interests. He explained that, "[the man] would come to the table and we found that the more often we met, trust was

being developed. . . . the less need there was to include a middle person - lawyers- because we felt we could do more business and achieve more by communicating with each other. . . ." Peter finished his story by explaining that a number of resolutions to the conflict were reached and that everyone walked away benefitting from the process.

Heather's response to how the training impacted her professionally indicated that she has been using some aspects of the conflict resolution process she learned. In particular she has been applying the "questioning skills" that are taught in different courses. "We use a lot of that in mediation training. You're trying to get the information from people . . ." To illustrate her use of the questioning skills Heather described situations in which employees would call for assistance with a conflict situation. She would ask, "Can you elaborate? Can you tell me what it is that happened?" She stated that using "open-ended questions," that encourage people to provide descriptive responses, allowed her to better understand the situation so that she could help the employee(s).

Another theme emerged from the responses of Cathy, Allison, Mary and Peter. Each of them explained that they had either used what they had learned through their training to teach others, or were planning to share the skills by teaching others. After participating in the True Colors and Conflict Resolution course which involves the use of a personality assessment tool, Allison became certified to facilitate the True Colors workshop. Cathy has become heavily involved in conflict resolution training within her workplace. She has helped develop and deliver the conflict resolution training. "I have been privileged enough to travel around Canada doing some of the training and helping develop other facilitators to deliver the training. In addition, her organization had uncovered, through a needs analysis, that a "one day information and awareness

workshop" was needed for all employees. Cathy explained that she was one of the people responsible in helping to develop and implement that workshop as well as develop facilitators who would be able to deliver the information within their various regions across the country. Although Mary did not mention her desire to teach in the field of conflict resolution at this point in the interview, she did state, in response to a later question, that "the idea of doing further study and teaching conflict resolution, peace making at the university level is also very interesting." Peter also expressed an interest in being involved with training that related to conflict resolution. "I was able to put forward a suggestion and kind of frame up a course called "cultural awareness." He explained that the course was going to be designed to help individuals conduct business with people from different cultural backgrounds. He envisioned the course as being able to encourage participants, when they are interacting with other cultures, to "take the time to get a sense of what their culture is about, who they are and how to deal with them [people from other cultures]."

Workplace Conflict

The next segment of the interview was designed to explore (a) the types of conflict situations in which the participants typically find themselves at work, (b) their current approach to these conflicts, and (c) their opinions on whether their behavior was similar or different to what it had been prior to their training. Since all the participants have very different work situations their stories were quite different; nonetheless I was able to categorize most types of conflict experienced by participants, into four groups: (a) conflicts involving clients; (b) conflicts involving employees; (c) conflicts involving peers; and (d) conflicts involving working groups.

Conflict Situations

Peggy, Peter and Phil, by nature of their work, frequently, if not exclusively, have dealt with clients. Peggy, for instance, worked with clients with mental illness. She explained that, "depending on how people are feeling, they can have conflict with each other." She would then be responsible for dealing with behavior that is inappropriate. In Peter's case, he had frequently interacted with business people who have had a conflict with his department and/or legislation that regulates his department. Finally, with regards to conflicts involving clients, Phil's occupation leads to his working with clients who are in a conflict situation with another party.

Peggy, Peter and Allison all hold management positions, and therefore each of them indicated that they are faced with conflicts involving employees. Allison described a conflict situation that can present itself at work. "Sometimes you slip and don't indicate that I need this now or I'd like to have this within the next couple of days, so you need to be very specific with people that you work with; because if you're not, they either assume that you want it now and when you ask another question, they may get upset. . ." The conflicts that Peggy has experienced involved employees who are in need of assistance in resolving conflicts.

> Staff who would have issues or concerns . . . situations they could be dealing with whether there are other organizations at hand to deal with, or policies that they might need to follow . . . or some discomfort with some kinds of work that they might have to do . . . there might be some conflicts that staff might have with clients I'd observe and have to give guidance. (Peggy, interview)

Peter described a specific conflict that emerged at his office "I had . . . two girls that worked with me and they were complaining about the perfume that one lady was wearing and in an open concept environment, you can smell people's perfumes quite easily . . . brought this matter to my attention, about the fact that this perfume was really bothering them." Peter explained that his

approach to this situation involved him first visiting the Human Resource Department to check on whether the department had a scent-free policy. When he determined that there wasn't a policy in place, he went back to the employees and explained that the person had a right to wear perfume but that if it was a real issue, they [the employees] should discuss their concerns with the employee whose perfume bothered them. The conflict had been brought to Peter's attention, shortly before he left the department. At the time of the interview he was not aware of the outcome.

Cathy, Mary and Heather all gave responses that indicated that some of the workplace conflict they experienced involved peers in the workplace. Although these colleagues worked in the same work environments as the participants, they were neither in positions of authority to the participants nor did they report to the participants. Cathy described one area of conflict in this category. Cathy explained that one of her roles at work involved her being an "employee assistance referral agent." She would "meet one-on-one with clients [colleagues] who may have some sort of need . . . someone who may be in conflict either at home or at work . . . they come to me and ask for some sort of guidance. As an employee assistance referral agent, Cathy would assess the situation and put the colleague in touch with the right resources. Mary gave an example that may not seem unique to her workplace.

> I wouldn't say that it has erupted as a conflict but it can be a conflict waiting to happen. People who do their dishes after they eat lunch - there are . . . a handful of people who do whatever dishes are there and they get done . . . we don't know who it is but there are people who leave their dishes for others to do . . . when people who do the dishes get tired of doing everybody's dishes. (Mary, interview)

Heather, who at the time of the interview, occupied an administrative support role, has found herself having to balance her own priorities with those of her department's staff.

> I have to balance my admin work and the survey work . . . deciding which work do I do first, which is more important then the clients or the staff here . . . people coming to me

and saying I need this, I need that and I need this too. Since I'm the admin person, they come to me if they need something. (Heather, interview)

Another common category of conflicts, experienced by some participants, involved groups that did not fall into any of the other categories. Both Cathy and Mary found themselves working to prevent and resolve conflicts that might arise in groups with whom they work. Cathy for instance stated "I would have interactions with people who are my peers or my superiors that would need to collaborate on something together and sometimes we don't always see things the same way . . ." Mary, at the time of the interview was coordinating a project that involved a working committee that was comprised of representatives from different organizations. In her work, "there are different perspectives . . . from all different groups that are involved." She also experienced conflicts when scheduling meetings, ". . . where there are conflicts in schedules . . . who has to be there and who should be adjusting their schedule to fit the rest of the group . . ."

Current Approach

Even though the types of conflict experienced by the participants fell into different categories, the way in which they handled or approached each situation was very similar. The common themes, surrounding participants' current approaches to conflict situations, included: (a) using effective communication strategies to resolve conflict; (b) coaching others to resolve their own conflicts; and (c) applying the conflict resolution process.

It seemed, from the data, that regardless of the situation, each participant was committed to resolving the conflict through the use of effective communication skills. My discussion with Cathy strongly reflected this theme. "In my typical day, I always try to exercise a collaborative effort." She described a collaborative approach as:

> People of differing opinions or ideas sit down together and discuss them with good listening and good communication skills, to be able to come to a full understanding of what each party wants and the reasons why they want it like that. And then, after looking at that . . . hopefully through some good listening and some effective questions . . . being able to understand how you can both realize a success by meeting your mutual needs, that if we both have a need, that we both meet it and we both come away feeling good about what we have done and what we have accomplished . . . we work together to get the best possible result, not necessarily my result or your result but it becomes . . . a "we." (Cathy, interview)

I asked Cathy to describe how she would collaborate with someone who was not familiar with the process. Her response reinforced the importance of communication. "I would try to engage them to try and bring them into the conversation." She further explained that she would use specific communication skills to engage the person. "I would ask them some really pointed questions or some effective questions about what is it about this situation that they feel strongly. . . ."

Cathy's story illustrated the use of communication skills in resolving conflict. All the other participants provided examples of how they applied specific communication skills to the situations with which they were faced. Five mentioned that they used some form of "questioning" to gain understanding or to uncover the real issues. "Listening" is another skill that 6 participants mentioned they applied in situations.

Another theme that emerged involved participants helping others resolve conflict. The participants' approach was "focused on helping others help themselves." Peggy, Cathy and Peter referred to this concept. Cathy said, "I don't jump in and resolve it for them . . . in any conflict situation people need to feel the power that they can resolve things themselves . . ." Peggy would help staff to generate options. There would be a lot of brainstorming, discussions around different options." She also indicated in an earlier discussion that she helped clients to come to their own solutions. Peter, in the conflict over perfume mentioned earlier said, "I threw the ball back to

them (the women who had complained about the perfume) to try and empower them with the opportunity to solve their own problem."

Another theme emerged, regarding the use of the conflict resolution process. Phil, Peter and Peggy all indicated that they have used the "six step process" with clients. Phil explained that when he is working with a client(s), "I make it clear to the parties that they're in a process . . . there's stages to the process . . ." Peggy and Peter's use of the conflict resolution process was highlighted earlier in this chapter.

Changes in Conflict Resolution Behavior

After each participant described their approaches to the conflicts they have experienced since their training, I asked them, "Would you describe your behavior as being different or similar to what it was before your training?" Five of the seven participants stated that their current approach to conflict in the workplace was different from what it would have been prior to their training. I asked each participant to elaborate. Allison responded by saying, "I think it's different. . . . I approach these situations differently now. . . .it's [conflict] not worth getting upset about. You just sort of take it in stride. If it's a group thing, you deal with the group; if it's an individual, you deal with the individual." Mary had the following to say:

> I think it's different from the training, I think. Before, I would have been more concerned about pleasing all of the group and that still is a concern for me, it's important that the relationship is good and positive but at the same time, I have to discipline myself to be forthright and acknowledge what I see is that a potential problem even if it's not what people want to hear or if they want to continue to avoid, if they're not interested and I recognize the importance of that because I know that the conflict will come somewhere else down the line. So, I'm conscious of my own need for approval and that has everything to do with my own ego and what I want people to think of me. Having to make that much less important than the overall objective and what's good for the project. (Mary, interview)

Peggy stated that:

> I think it's quite different . . . I'm probably a little more comfortable with angry feelings I guess. I think I'm quite sure in terms of that. So the conflict doesn't bother me as much probably as what it would have a few years ago. . . . I think with other employees, I don't feel so much that I have to come up with the answers as I would have five years ago. (Peggy, interview)

Peter said that, had he been faced with the perfume situation prior to the training, he may have responded differently. He explained: prior to taking the course. . . I probably would have approached the individual who had the perfume and said, "look, you really stink and quit wearing this stuff, it is bothering a lot of people." But I took a different approach to it and I think it is related to the training.

Heather described the difference as being more confident in addressing an issue:

> I probably would, I'd keep everything inside. You know, if someone came over and said they needed something right away, instead of saying well, okay, you know, this is what I'm doing now and I'll be able to get to your request in half an hour or something – I would just take it all in and wouldn't say a word and try to juggle everything and get it all done. So this way if somebody comes to me and wants something and if I can't do it right away, I tell the person, "I can't do it right away, I have some other priorities. Is it okay if it gets done later?" (Heather, interview)

Two of the participants had a different perspective on this question. Cathy described her current behavior as being similar to what it had been before the training.

> I think before my training in conflict resolution, I think I had good listening skills, I think I had good communications skills. . . . So, I would say that prior to then, I was good at it or I did it; but I think now I do it that much better and I think I could still do it better. Just given the opportunity to be able to continue to practice and work at it. (Cathy, interview)

Phil's answer was unique in that he said the behavior that he would display in his current work would be different than what he had done prior to the training because he was in an entirely different capacity.

Impact on Personal Lives

During this segment of the interview, I explored how participants were affected personally by the training, and how they now approach conflict in their personal lives. The participants' responses, to those questions, are summarized in the following table:

Table IV

Impact of Training on Personal Lives

Participant	Personal Changes	Impact on Personal Life
Mary	● Greater self-awareness ● Enhanced self-perception ● Contributor to society	● Understanding others' perspectives ● Increased confidence in applying CR skills ● Overcoming some avoidance tendencies ● Continuing to avoid some conflicts
Cathy	● Ability to internalize conflict more effectively ● Greater self-awareness	● Strengthening relationships ● Helping others learn CR skills ● Engaging in self reflection
Peter	● Ability to internalize conflict more effectively ● Greater self-awareness ● Contributor to society	● Using an informal process for CR ● Mediating conflicts in home ● Strengthening relations ● Helping others to learn CR skills ● Influencing others' behavior
Allison	● Ability to internalize conflict more effectively	● Overcoming avoidance tendencies
Phil	● Greater self-awareness ● Enhanced self-perception	● Increased self confidence in applying CR skills ● Using of informal process of CR ● Overcoming avoidance tendencies
Heather	● Enhanced self-perception	● Increased self-confidence in applying CR skills ● Using an informal process of CR ● Mediating conflicts at home ● Strengthening relationships ● Helping others learn skills
Peggy	● Greater self-awareness ● Ability to internalize conflict more effectively	● Using an informal process of CR

Each participant expressed the view that he or she had been affected personally by the training. The themes can be separated into two categories: personal changes and new approaches to conflict resolution.

Personal Changes

Four themes emerged with respect to the personal changes that participants experienced, as a result of their training. These themes focused on (a) internalization of conflict, (b) self-awareness, (c) self confidence and (d) social action.

The internalization of conflict of feelings and emotions were discussed by Allison, Cathy and Peter. For example, Allison stated that, "I don't let things bother me as much as I used to." Cathy explained that, "It's [conflict] not going to eat me up anymore." Peter stated that the training, "helped me personally to become more in tune with conflict."

Cathy, Mary, Peter, Peggy and Phil all discussed the fact that they gained a greater sense of "self awareness" as a result of the conflict resolution courses in which they participated. For instance Cathy said, "I've become more aware of who I am as a person." Another example of this theme came from Mary who responded by saying, "[I'm] more aware and conscious of my own needs and styles."

Phil, Mary and Heather all spoke about changes in their self-perception or level of self-confidence. For example, Heather described herself as being "shy" before taking the courses, and that the training helped her to overcome her shyness. She elaborated that:

> Just being around people, being able to meet new people . . . there are a lot of role plays and a lot of exercises in the courses, so you have no choice, you have to participate. And I was very shy before . . . it really helped me to be more outgoing, more assertive, more confident, more sure of myself. (Heather, interview)

Mary and Peter both referred to a greater commitment to using their skills to contribute to society in general. Mary explained:

> I feel a much better contributor to society or to whatever projects I might undertake and that's on many different levels. If I'm working in a volunteer organization - all kinds of conflict within that sort of situation and to have the skills to resolve that so that you can

> really move forward to make a positive change and I'm thankful to have those skills. (Mary, interview)

New Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Because I wanted to learn more about how the training impacted the participants, I asked: "How would you describe your current approach to conflict resolution in your personal/home life?" Several themes emerged from the responses including: (a) The importance of understanding others' perspectives, (b) increased self confidence in applying conflict resolution techniques, (c) the use of an informal process to resolving conflicts, (d) overcoming avoidance tendencies, (e) mediating family disputes, (e) positive outcomes of conflict resolution and (f) the strengthening of others' conflict resolution skill levels.

Every participant articulated that they have realized the importance of seeking to understand the other person (party) involved in the conflict situation with them. Phil's response illustrated this theme.

> Well, with four teenagers and a spouse in the house, there's all sorts of levels of personal resource- based disputes . . . over who gets what, who's going where. Personally it (conflict resolution training) changes how you approach conflicts. You become much better at listening to the other side and to finding out, learning how their point of view makes sense to them instead of getting my point across. (Phil, interview)

Mary, Heather and Phil have noticed that they have more confidence in applying their conflict resolution skills. A story that Mary told, reflected this theme:

> I took a course in negotiations and it was days before I went looking for a car. I was going to negotiate for a car and felt so much more confident going in . . . with just a few skills. I felt confident to ask the questions . . . if I disagreed with the person or . . . insisted that something be on paper, that the person didn't have to like me. I have a responsibility to be respectful but I don't have a responsibility to make that person like me . . . in negotiating, it's not based on trust, it's based on a clear agreement. (Mary, interview)

Four of the participants indicated that they have used an "informal process" to help them resolve conflicts. By informal they refer to using some of the skills sets that are used in the various stages of the process. Heather illustrated this theme by describing the process and how she has used it with her daughters. "The skills that we use in mediation is a basic set of skills, like the questioning skills and the communication skills . . . you go through the process . . . different stages that you go through." When she began to speak about working with her daughters she said:

> It's more of an informal process . . . well I tend to resolve a conflict between the two of them. "All right, I can see that you have something that's bothering you about something that she's doing, okay? So why don't we all sit down and you can tell her exactly how you're feeling - when she does this, this is how it makes me feel." So using the skills to resolve conflicts between the two of them, and then at the same time, it's like, you feel something, you know, knowing my children, I can tell that there's something. So I'll sit down and I'll say, "Okay, I know there's something that is bothering you; you haven't talked to me for a few days." And then I try and talk to her, try to get her to tell me. I tell her all the time, "It's okay, you can tell me. Whatever it is you've done' or - usually something I've done - you can tell me what it is, and I'll understand and won't get angry. I just need for you to tell me. It helps if I can understand what it is that I've done that has made you upset." (Heather, interview)

Responses from 3 participants dealt with the fact that participants now seek to resolve personal conflicts rather then avoid them. When Allison spoke about conflict in her family she said, "I work with my family a bit differently . . . if there's a conflict, I'd rather bring it out in the open now." Mary as well, seemed to have become more comfortable in letting "conflict happen" so it can be dealt with. A majority of the responses also indicated that participants have used conflict resolution skills to involve parties who may not be comfortable with communicating openly. Mary explained that when she has felt that her husband was holding back his thoughts or feelings she used some of her conflict resolution skills to "draw that out."

Both Peter and Heather have used conflict resolution skills to mediate conflicts at home. As was mentioned earlier, Heather has worked with her daughters to help them resolve conflicts that they are experiencing with one another. Peter elaborated on his use of mediation skills as well:

> My wife and daughter, my daughter is 15 and they love each other to pieces and both of them would go to the wall in terms of defending each other. But I don't know if it's a woman thing, but they both have to set their bounds and sometimes they get into some pretty heated discussions on things, and my wife is doing it out of a loving care of the child and my child, I think, is trying to establish a boundary or fight for her freedoms to a certain extent. So sometimes, . . . this doesn't happen a lot, but I remember . . . sitting down between the two of them and trying to mediate. (Peter, interview)

Both Cathy, Heather and Peter specifically mentioned that their communication with their family has had positive results. For example, Cathy describes that she and her husband have strengthened their relationship, "through the course of conversations and being attentive and asking things and watching the body language and understanding that things are happening that we've been able to establish a better, deeper communication about stuff." Speaking about her relationship with her daughters, Heather stated that the training has been helpful. "So it has helped a lot to communicate, to get them to talk to me. The kids have been wonderful, we're really close, they talk to me a lot. That's worth a lot."

Peter, Cathy and Heather all expressed that using the conflict resolution skills at home has, in a way, improved their family members' skills in the areas of communication and conflict resolution. Mary put it this way, " It's also the ability and casual interaction with family to help other people learn the skills too."

Several responses, regarding the personal impact of the training, did not relate to any of the aforementioned themes. Cathy has recognized that she has participated in more, "self-

reflection" and, "self-assessing or self-examining" since having taken conflict resolution training. Peter had noticed that when he approached a conflict situation with specific skills that the other parties became influenced and were more willing to work towards resolving the matter. "People seem to plug in. . . . to your way of doing business." Mary explained that although she had developed effective conflict resolution skills and had become more confident in applying them to various situations, she recognized that she has continued to avoid some personal conflict situations:

> I still perceive avoidance tendencies ...like there is one conflict between my sister and I and the relationship at this time; it's still very friendly and we enjoy time together and all that sort of stuff but there is something between us that hasn't been resolved and I know that I'm avoiding that, because I know how hard it will be when we go to approach it. (Mary, interview)

Future Plans

I asked each participant, "What plans have you made, if any, to change anything or do anything differently as a result of your training?" The responses varied. Allison and Cathy mentioned that they were going to research possible career opportunities. Allison, Mary, Peggy and Heather are going to continue their studies in conflict resolution. Peter explained that he has a few projects lined up; he is going to move forward with the "cultural awareness" workshop he is developing, he is planning to work within his organization to advance a scent free policy, and he going to organize a wellness committee to help employees "take little steps to help reduce stress and reduce conflict in the workplace." Phil and Heather don't have specific plans, they are simply committed to continually "applying the skills" they have developed.

Other Impacts

To help close the interview, I asked participants "Have there been any ways in which your participation in conflict resolution studies has affected you that we haven't discussed." Both Heather and Phil explained that they had gained more from their studies than they had originally intended. Heather stated that, "the initial reason for taking the program was for my work . . . you take training for work, you learn the skills that you need to do the work. But these skills are, they're completely different, they're something that you can use every single day of your life for different things." Peter felt that he had, "oversimplified goals going in and came out with benefits that are uncomparable to the over-simplified objectives." He further articulated that he had simply planned on getting, "a paper backing that would make marketing skills that I already had, easier to do." In addition he became, "a whole new person in a lot of ways . . . in terms of dealing with conflict, whole new skill set, whole new approach. A person with a whole new perspective of who they were and how they manage the world."

Both Allison and Heather mentioned an organizational impact in that they believe organizations can benefit from supporting conflict resolution training and effective conflict resolution in the workplace. Allison advocated that, "I think that in this day and age, it's really important that organizations realize the importance of having people who either have the training or have opportunities to take courses like this. And I'm not thinking just of managers, I think it's also people in the front line; it would be really helpful for them." Heather's response indicated that her organization has become very committed to having employees use effective conflict resolution strategies rather than the traditional grievance procedure. "The message is being sent out that it's [the conflict resolution process] a great way to resolve conflicts. . . . more managers

are asking for the services of mediators to resolve conflicts." She explained that the conflict resolution process fosters a "win/win" solution whereas the grievance procedure involves a "win/lose" outcome.

> Managers feel a lot better about using this process in the workplace because if both parties win, then when you go back to the workplace there's no. . . hard feelings. If you go through the grievance process, one person isn't happy. . . it might spark up, or whatever, into something, into another conflict. (Heather, interview)

Cathy, Heather, Peter and Peggy mentioned that the people they met throughout the course, whether it be facilitators or other participants, had an impact on them. They seemed to learn a great deal from group discussions. As Cathy expressed,

> Some of the contacts, of the people that I've met . . . I'm glad to have met them . . . I've learned from them in just the space of one day or in the space of half of the day. Whether they've been an instructor at UPEI or they've been in on a session . . . it's been very powerful. (Cathy, interview)

There were a few common responses that happened to relate to previous questions and therefore were discussed earlier. They related to training other people, career development, and helping people resolve their own difficulties.

A response that did not relate to any others was regarding the cost of the courses. Mary was 1 of 3 participants who covered the tuition costs themselves; the other participants' organizations sponsored them. Mary said, "It's affecting me financially in that it's quite expensive to take the courses. . . . to do the certificate course at UPEI . . .is about five thousand dollars in the end. . . . it may pay off in the end but definitely, I've felt the burden." She did mention, however, that she was successful in obtaining employment due to the training she had received.

Common Themes

After coding the findings for each question, I noted themes that emerged that were common throughout the findings. These general themes are (1) understanding self and others, (2) importance of seeking understanding, (3) helping others to solve their own problems, (4) using a conflict resolution process, and (5) interactive teaching methods

The first theme really caught my interest. Overwhelmingly, all of the participants, at one time or another, mentioned that they really benefitted from using the various self-assessment tools. More importantly they not only gained a better appreciation for their natural tendencies in a given conflict situation, but they were able to realize that everyone is unique and that each person with whom they interact is going to approach conflict in their own way. The participants felt that this knowledge allowed them to view and approach conflict more effectively.

The second theme conveyed the importance of seeking to understand the other party's interests in a conflict situation. All of the participants expressed that if you are to resolve conflict and create a solution that benefits all, that the first priority is to understand where the other person is coming from. Once the other party believes that you are understand their interests and that you are genuinely interested in reaching a mutually beneficial solution, then they will be more likely to be open to hearing your viewpoint and working with you to resolve the conflict.

Four of the participants reported that when they are helping others in conflict resolutions, that they are now more focused on providing the parties with a way to "empower" them to reach their own solutions rather than "jumping in" and "offering advice."

The fourth theme was the use of a conflict resolution process. Five of the participants referred to the six step conflict resolution process that is the foundation of a number of the

courses in the certificate program. What was interesting was that the terms "formal"and "informal" were often used to describe the process. It seems that the "formal" six step process is used, most often, in complex work-place situations; whereas the "informal" process which usually involves the use of just a few of the stages and/or skills, is applied in personal situations or less complicated situations at work.

The fifth theme that was common throughout the findings focused upon the interactive teaching methods that were used in the various courses. The methods provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on their perspectives toward conflict, to discuss their thoughts with peers, and to practice the skills they were learning. Role plays, self-assessment tools and small group activities and discussions were the methods that appeared to have had a positive effect on the participants.

CHAPTER V
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore individuals' experiences as a result of their participation in conflict resolution training. The focal questions that guided my research were:

1. What, if any, changes in perspective with regards to conflict and conflict resolution, did participants experience as a result of their participation in conflict resolution training at CCRS?
2. What impact, if any, did participation in the conflict resolution courses have on the professional and/or personal lives of the participants?

In this chapter I will discuss how the literature relates to my findings. I will also return to my original questions and compare my research findings with the literature. In addition, I will discuss the limitations of my study and my recommendations for further research in the field of conflict resolution training for adults. The chapter will conclude with my personal reflections on my own experience as a conflict resolution training participant and my transformational journey as a graduate student.

Adults are returning to the "classroom"in growing numbers, in an attempt to prevent obsolescence and to keep their knowledge and skills relevant in an ever-changing society (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999; Caudron, 1999; Gordon, 1997; Knowles, 1970; Mezirow, 1990,1991; Solomon, 1999). My research demonstrates that this phenomenon is occurring in the

area of conflict resolution training in Prince Edward Island. Since the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies was established, the number of individual enrollments in the various course offerings has grown considerably. There were 121 enrollments in 1996 and 295 in 2000, with total enrollments equalling 1,809 (V. Smitherman, personal communication, November 12, 2002). Caffarella and Merriam (1999) found, in their review of numerous studies on participation in adult education, that adults' primary motives for returning to higher education were job or career related. My findings strongly corroborate the studies. All of the participants in my study described a professional motivation for enrolling in conflict resolution training. Two of the participants, at the time of enrollment, were working in departments that dealt specifically with workplace conflict resolution. Two others explained that they were self-employed in the field of mediation and general conflict resolution. Three people specifically mentioned that they had a desire to develop greater conflict resolution skills in order to improve their performance at work.

My findings provided support for the assumptions of andragogy about how adults learn. One of the assumptions of Knowles' theory of andragogy (1970, 1973, 1984) is that as individuals mature they become to view themselves as being capable of making their own decisions and taking responsibility for managing their lives. They also have a strong need to have others perceive them as being responsible, and self-directing. All of the participants engaged in the conflict resolution training on a voluntary basis. In addition, they all chose to direct their attention to applying their learning in their daily lives. Voluntary participation and application of learning reflect Cranton's (1992) statement regarding self directed learning:

> Self-directed learning is the process of voluntarily engaging in a learning experience, being free to think or act as an individual during that experience, being free to reflect on that experience and being able to discern change or growth as a result of the experience, regardless of the setting in which it occurs (p. 56).

The assumption that as individuals mature they accumulate vast experience which they can and do draw upon as a rich resource for learning while also serving as a learning resource for others was evident in the findings (Cafarella & Merriam,1999; Cyr, 1999; Knowles 1970, 1973, 1984; MacKeracher, 1996). Four participants indicated that being able to reflect on their past behaviour toward conflict was encouraged through the use of various self-assessment tools. Group discussions and role plays allowed the participants to discuss and reflect on their past experiences and provided them with opportunities to learn from their peers' experiences. As was stated in the findings, Cathy emphasized, "I've learned from them [instructors and classmates] in just the space of one day or in the space of half of the day. Whether they've been an instructor at UPEI or they've been in on a session . . . it's been very powerful."

The andragogical model has assumed that "adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know or do something in order to perform more effectively in some aspects of their lives" (Knowles, 1984, p. 11). As aspects of individuals' social roles develop, their readiness to learn changes. (Knowles, 1970, 1973, 1984). None of the participants were mandated to attend the conflict resolution training; they each chose to enroll in the courses because they wanted to improve their conflict resolution skills. The fact that all of these participants had participated in at least five courses strongly suggests that they saw the relevance of this learning. In addition, although all of the participants began their studies with a professional motivation, they developed a readiness to learn how to apply the skills in their personal lives. All of the participants discussed how he/she had applied their learning beyond the workplace. Allison, for instance, emphasized that she has made a conscious effort to engage in conflict

resolution with her family rather than avoid conflict situations. She stated, "I work with my family a bit differently . . . if there's a conflict, I'd rather bring it out in the open now." Mary, Heather and Peggy stated that they have applied their skills when interacting with their spouses. Heather, Peggy, Carol Phil and Peter all indicated that the conflict resolution training has permitted them to effectively engage in conflict resolution with their children. Moreover, both Peter and Heather have found that having stronger skills has allowed them to effectively mediate conflicts between members of their families. Mary also demonstrated how conflict resolution is essentially a general life skill. She used her strengthened negotiation skills to buy a car. These findings confirm the assumptions Knowles (1970, 1973,1984) makes about learners' readiness to learn and their orientation to learning.

With regards to the participants' motivation to learn, my findings indicate that they were intrinsically motivated. Even though the participants did not specifically mention that their goals for the training were to increase self-confidence and enhance their self-awareness, all of them indicated that they considered these outcomes to be very beneficial. I did not get a sense from the participants, that they were motivated to learn by extrinsic factors such as a possible pay raise or a job promotion. Phil did indicate that his original goal was to simply get the piece of paper (the certificate) to add credibility to his business; however even he emphasized that the training allowed him to gain greater self-awareness and an enhanced self-perception.

My findings also relate to the literature I reviewed on transformative learning. A focal aspect of transformative learning is the process of perspective transformation which involves a number of stages (Cafarella & Merriam, 1999; Cranton, 1992, 2002; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1997, 1998, 2000). As mentioned earlier, the stages may include:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt and shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquisitions of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Building of competence and self confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 168)

Although the aim of my research was not to explore whether the participants had undergone the process, my findings do indicate that some of the participants did proceed through a number of the stages.

Research suggests that the process of transformation is usually triggered by some event that "exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard or read" (Cranton, 2002, p. 66). Mezirow (1990) refers to this event as a disorienting dilemma. From my interviews with the participants, I did not find evidence of a specific event that served as a catalyst for transformation except in Phil's case. He mentioned that prior to enrolling in conflict resolution training he had been faced with a significant change in the direction of his career. As a result, he had decided to become self employed directly in the field of conflict resolution and thus wanted to enhance his skills in this area. The fact that the other participants did not make reference to a specific triggering event supports Cranton's (2002) statement that, "Often neither we as teachers nor the transforming student can pinpoint just what initiated or sustained the process" (p. 66).

Six participants indicated that they had engaged, at some point during their training, in

self-assessment and/or self-reflection with regards to their natural tendencies and previous responses in conflict situations. Critical assessment of assumptions is a phase in the perspective transformation process (Mezirow, 1990, 1991). The participants did not indicate whether they had spent any time critically assessing their assumptions with regards to conflict and conflict resolution.

Another phase of the transformative process involves the learner recognizing that other people have had similar experiences and have "negotiated similar changes" (Mezirow, 1990, p.168). Four participants referred to the value of the small group discussions. Participants collaborated with their fellow participants and discussed their experiences with conflict. They were able to realize that other people have experienced similar conflicts and they were able to learn from these people. Heather, for instance, explained that having the opportunity to talk with her classmates helped her to realize that she was not alone. She said, "I've got a lot of conflict in my life right now, but everybody has a lot of conflict in their lives all the time." In addition, learning that other people had negotiated their way through difficult conflict situations seemed to give her confidence that she would be able to do the same.

I found evidence that participants had revised some of their perspectives as they progressed through the various courses. While 6 participants described their perception of conflict as being somewhat negative prior to their training, none of them reported that they continued to view conflict as negative. (The specific perspective changes with regards to conflict are elaborated upon, later in this chapter.) In addition to the changes in perspective toward conflict and conflict resolution, I also found that some participants experienced another perspective change. Three of the participants explained that their perspectives toward themselves had changed. Mary indicated

that she sees her role, in conflict situations, differently as a result of the training. Heather and Phil emphasized that they have changed as individuals. Phil described himself as, "a person with a whole new perspective of who they [sic] are and how they [sic] manage in the world." As illustrated in the findings, Heather described herself as being "shy" before taking the courses, and that the training helped her to overcome her shyness:

> Just being around people, being able to meet new people . . . there are a lot of role plays and a lot of exercises in the courses, so you have no choice, you have to participate. And I was very shy before . . . it really helped me to be more outgoing, more assertive, more confident, more sure of myself. (Heather, interview)

Bova and Pohland (2000) have found that the process of perspective transformation often results in a "fundamental change in one's personality" (p. 145).

With regards to the perceived changes in perspective, each participant indicated that the changes took place gradually as they progressed through the courses. Researchers have suggested that transformation is gradual (Cranton, 1992, 2002; Mezirow, 1990). Cranton (1992) emphasized that "Transformation is a long-term process. No one will undergo transformation in a one day workshop (although the process might begin there and be continued by the learner)" (p. 174).

The findings support the premise that a perspective transformation involves acquiring necessary skills and knowledge. Three participants specifically mentioned that when they had begun their studies, they did not intend to pursue the certificate program. However, as they learned about conflict resolution their interest in enhancing their conflict resolution skills grew. All of the participants stated that they have developed specific skills that have helped them to effectively resolve conflicts. Moreover, each participant is planning to participate in more conflict resolution training.

Other aspects of perspective transformation are the building of competence and confidence as relationships are negotiated or renegotiated, and finally thinking and behaving in ways that are congruent with the newly formed perspectives (Cranton, 1992, 2002; Mezirow, 1990,1991; Taylor, 1997, 1998, 2000). My findings indicate that participants did progress through these stages. Phil, Mary, Heather and Peggy all stated that they have achieved increased self-confidence as a result of their training. As was explained earlier, all of the participants have actively striven to improve the quality of their personal relationships by applying what they have learned. In addition, each participant has applied their conflict resolution skills in their various workplace settings. Three participants have used their skills during conflict situations with peers. Three of the participants, who were in management capacities, have applied their skills with employees. Three participants have engaged clients in the conflict resolution process. Two participants described how their conflict resolution training has helped them to better collaborate as a member of a project group. Three participants specifically mentioned coaching others to resolve their own conflicts. Cathy, for instance, when she explained how she would coach others to resolve their problems, stated, "I don't jump in and resolve it for them . . . in any conflict situation people need to feel the power that they can resolve things themselves . . ." Essentially all of the participants have taken action outside the classroom and have behaved in ways that have supported their more open views toward conflict.

My review of the literature also explored conflict resolution training. Researchers have proposed that many adults have learned to view conflict in a negative light. For example Johnson, Johnson and Stevahn (2002) proposed that, "adults generally have negative views of conflict and perceive conflict as causing divisiveness, pychological distress and social disorder, even war" (p.

325). Schellenberg (1996) emphasized that conflict has received a negative reputation:

> When we begin to consider the phenomena of social conflict, most of us start with a negative attitude. That is we associate conflict with what is undesirable. Conflict is bad. . . . Most of us feel bad when we think about our conflicts. They worry us. (p. 9)

My findings support the research. As mentioned earlier, 6 participants stated that they had begun their training with a negative outlook toward conflict. A number of studies did indicate that conflict resolution training has been effective in helping learners to examine and revise their perspectives toward conflict and conflict resolution (Johnson, Johnson & Stevahn, 2002; Palmer & Roessler, 2000; Shuford & Spencer, 1999; Stern 2000). My findings concur that effective conflict resolution training can encourage a more positive view of conflict and conflict resolution. As was mentioned previously in this chapter, all of the participants indicated that they have perceived a change in their perspective as a result of their training. Upon elaborating on the change, 2 participants explained that they gained a better appreciation of the different styles of conflict resolution. Once they were better able to understand how they and others operate in a conflict situation they were able to learn how to work around these tendencies to begin to view conflict as an opportunity to achieve mutually beneficial results. Two other participants stated that they now view conflict as an opportunity for change. Four participants stated that they view conflict as an opportunity to understand the other party and to seek improved communication. These revised perspectives toward conflict support Schellenberg's (1996) argument that conflict should be viewed as an important catalyst ". . . for stimulating new thought, for promoting social change, for defining our group relationships, for helping us form our own senses of personal identity. . ." (p. 9).

Research has also stated that conflict resolution training has been successful in encouraging individuals to learn and apply effective conflict resolution strategies (Davidson & Versluys, 1999; Johnson, Johnson & Stevahn, 2002; Palmer & Roessler, 2000; Shuford & Spenser, 1999; Stern, 2000). In the preceding paragraphs, I have discussed how the participants have engaged in effective conflict resolution in a variety of situations in both their personal and professional lives. A common theme that did emerge from the findings that related to learning application involved participants enhancing their communication skills. All of the participants described how they have improved their communication skills considerably. Four of the participants indicated that they have applied, in their efforts to resolve conflict, some of the skill-sets they have learned such as active listening, effective questioning and "I" messages (an "I" message is a communication tool aimed at problem-solving, which allows a party to express his/her needs and interests, in a responsible manner, so that the other person does not feel blamed or attacked.) Each participant indicated that they have come to realize the importance of understanding the other party involved in the conflict and they have begun to apply their skills to learn more about the other person's interests. Active listening was one of the fundamental skills that participants found they have applied in their relationships. Leaman-Miller (1999) stated that, "the goal of active listening is understanding, not to win an argument but to learn what another is thinking and feeling" (p. 60). Leaman-Miller further emphasized that active listening assists in the conflict resolution process because it "allows the issues underlying a conflict to percolate to consciousness to be dealt with rather than remain boiling below the surface" (p. 61).

Three participants emphasized that as a result of their training they are minimizing their natural tendencies to avoid conflict in their personal lives and are taking a more active approach to

resolving conflicts. Mary did state that although she has improved her ability to actively seek to resolve conflict, she still perceives avoidance tendencies in her behavior toward some conflict situations. She briefly spoke about a conflict between herself and her sister. The conflict has existed for many years and Mary stated that she continues to avoid engaging in the conflict rather than face a difficult resolution process.

As I return to my original research questions, I am confident that the first question: "What, if any, changes in perspective with regards to conflict and conflict resolution, did participants experience as a result of their participation in conflict resolution training at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies?" has been adequately answered in the preceding section of this chapter. The second question "What impact, if any, did participation in the conflict resolution courses have in the professional and/or personal lives of the participants?" requires additional discussion.

My findings suggest that all of the participants believe that their participation in conflict resolution training has had a profound impact on their lives, moreover as the participants described the impact they've experienced, a number of themes emerged that do progress beyond the literature cited in this thesis. I will begin by addressing the impact that the training had on the professional lives of the participants since they all cited professional motives for enrolling in the training.

All of the participants indicated that they have successfully applied their learning in their careers. Five of the seven participants specifically stated that they have noticed that their performance has improved since they began studying conflict resolution. Interestingly, Cathy, Allison, Peter, and Mary have become very committed to sharing what they have learned by training others in conflict resolution. Cathy at the time of the interview was already facilitating

conflict resolution workshops within her workplace. A significant theme that emerged from the responses of 4 participants is that they have found that the conflict resolution skills that they have developed have provided them with enhanced career opportunities. Mary, for instance, stated that she was successful in obtaining the position which she occupied at the time of the interview, because of the specific conflict resolution training that she had received. Conflict resolution training was a requirement for the position. Phil believes that the training has improved his performance as a mediator and has helped him to market his business. Cathy and Allison have plans to research some career opportunities. Moreover, Cathy is seriously considering becoming self-employed as a mediator or a conflict resolution consultant. These enhanced career opportunities appear to be one of the unexpected outcomes of the conflict resolution training.

Participation in the conflict resolution training has also had a significant effect on the participants' personal lives. As was elaborated upon earlier, each of the participants has applied effective conflict resolution strategies in various personal conflict situations. Two participants specifically mentioned that being able to communicate better has allowed them to enhance their personal relationships. Cathy, for instance explained that she and her husband currently enjoy a relationship in which they communicate at a much deeper level. Heather mentioned that she and her daughter have a much closer relationship now.

The conflict resolution training, as was discussed earlier, definitely had an impact on the participants as individuals. Two of the interviewees described themselves as being completely different people as a result of the training. Five participants stated that the increased self-awareness they have achieved is one of the personal changes they value. Being able to internalize conflict more effectively was also cited, by 4 of the individuals, as being one of the impacts of the

training. Peggy for instance has learned to manage her anger and respond to others' anger in a way that is less stressful. Allison does not allow conflict to impact her as before and Cathy feels more at peace with some difficult situations she has been experiencing.

Interestingly, the conflict resolution training also appeared to have an impact on other people in the participants' lives, which is another unexpected outcome. Three participants indicated that they have used their conflict resolution skills to help various family members improve their skills. Peter, in particular, elaborated about how proud he is of his children's abilities to resolve conflict. One of Peter's stories involved his son who was a peer mediator in his school. "The guidance counselor came up to me . . . and said, '[Peter], you should be proud of your young fellow . . . he worked with this troubled youth this year, did more for him than he'll ever realize'." Cathy and Mary have found that their husbands have become better at expressing themselves more openly since they have been applying conflict resolution skills at home.

The final impact with regards to participants' personal lives revolves around contribution. Mary and Peter both indicated that they have developed a greater commitment to using their skills to contribute to society in general. Although these participants were the only individuals to specifically mention contributing to society, I found that all of the participants were taking action that would have positive consequences for society. Whether participants are using their skills to mediate conflicts at home, whether they are using them to help colleagues resolve their own problems, or whether they are sharing their skills in a training seminar, all of these activities, I suggest, will have a ripple effect. As participants model and share effective conflict resolution skills, more people will be inspired to apply interest-based conflict resolution strategies which will assuredly improve our society as a whole.

Limitations

Firstly, this study is bounded and situated in the specific context of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies. The results cannot be generalized, yet readers may decide that certain findings of this study are applicable in other situations. This study involved the exploration of 7 individuals' experiences, from their own perspectives, therefore the findings may not be reflective of others' experiences because participants of the conflict resolution program have diverse backgrounds and experiences and individual reactions to the training would be unique.

Secondly, there was a lack of specific demographic information gathered from the participants; more detailed information may have shed more light on how participation in the conflict resolution training may have impacted specific relationships of the participants.

Thirdly, although each of the participants, at the time of the interviews, had completed at least five courses through the CCRS, they were at different stages in their studies (some had taken more courses than others). In addition, the interviewees had participated in different groupings of elective courses. Both of these areas of difference may have affected the experiences of the participants and the degree to which the training had impacted upon them.

Finally, a portion of the interviews were retrospective, in that participants were asked to describe their perspectives and reactions to conflict, prior to their training. Moreover significant time (1 to 5 years) had lapsed between when the participants began their studies and when the interviews took place. These time lapses might have impacted upon the participants' abilities to accurately recall their past perspectives and behaviors.

Recommendations

Although my research has answered the questions: "What changes in perspective have participants experienced as a result of conflict resolution training?" and "What impact has conflict resolution training had on participants lives?", there still remain many unanswered questions. The following is a list of recommendations and rationales for future research.

- A formal program evaluation be conducted at the CCRS.

Since the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies has been in operation for over 5 years, a timely formal program evaluation may be helpful in affirming the strengths of the program. If the faculty is interested in enhancing what the program has to offer, an evaluation could also provide them with suggestions for improvement.

- An analysis study be conducted to determine the market, on Prince Edward Island, for conflict resolution training among those who have not had it.

Such a study could assist the CCRS in customizing its offerings and its marketing strategies to appeal to a broader range of clientele, particularly among the private sector. The study could also help to determine how the training could be made more accessible to the general public.

- Research be conducted that explores how many of the participants, after completing the "Introduction to Conflict Resolution" course, have chosen to participate in other courses

offered through the CCRS.

The findings of this research could help determine what impacts upon participants' decisions to pursue or not pursue further training. This information could assist the CCRS to develop enhanced strategies for encouraging "first-time" participants to enroll in future courses and/or the certificate program.

- A survey study be conducted to ascertain what specific career opportunities exist for graduates of the CCRS's certificate program. Such a study could also examine the career experiences of graduates of the program.

The results of this study could be used as career development information for future graduates. The labor market information, generated from the survey, may also be helpful in promoting the program to under-graduates and individuals who are considering a career change.

- A longitudinal study be undertaken that begins prior to participants taking their first course (immediately following enrollment) and concludes with a follow up with participants 3 to 5 years after their completion of the certificate program.

Research of this type would have significance to the field of conflict resolution training in that it could explore how perspectives and behaviors change over time as participants progress through the training and it could examine the long-term impact that the training has on participants' lives.

- A quantitative study that examines how conflict resolution training affects such workplace issues as absenteeism, employee turnover, formal employee grievances, sales, and customer service.

This study could measure the effectiveness of conflict resolution training on organizational productivity and could help to identify the cost/benefit ratio of the training to employers.

- A comparative study, of the various conflict resolution training programs offered in North America, be conducted to explore such components as curriculum, faculty qualifications, graduate requirements, learning assessment strategies and participant evaluations.

Comparing the different programs can highlight the commonalities and provide the basis for the establishment of standards for the field of conflict resolution training.

Personal Reflections

It is a surreal experience to be writing the concluding section of my thesis. There have been numerous occasions where I have doubted whether I would actually reach this point. It has definitely been a journey of transformative learning for me; therefore I believe that my personal reflections on both my experiences as a fledgling student of conflict resolution as well as a graduate student will prove a fitting conclusion to this thesis.

My interest in pursuing conflict resolution training had started to emerge before I began my research. However, I had decided to postpone enrolling in courses until after I had completed

the interviews with the participants. I wanted to limit the pre-conceived notions that I might have had toward the training so that I could be more open to exploring the experiences of the interviewees. As I began to listen to each person's stories I became very eager to learn how I too could create positive changes in my life. I found each participant's accounts of their experiences both fascinating and inspiring.

I believe that learning how to effectively manage and resolve conflict is a transformative learning experience. The triggering event, that has initiated the perspective transformation process for me was my becoming a parent. Shortly after my daughter was born, I became increasingly uncomfortable with some of the ineffective and sometimes destructive habits that my husband and I had developed with regards to communicating and responding to conflict in our relationship. We both decided to make a conscious effort to improve the manner in which we interact with one another and our daughter. Our goal is to strengthen our relationship so that we can model, for our daughter, positive conflict resolution strategies. The training that I have received, has definitely supported this goal.

I began my studies in conflict resolution in September 2002. By mid November, I had completed two courses offered through the CCRS. I was very impressed with the instructor's abilities to effectively facilitate adult learning . Both courses were highly interactive and learner-centered. Most of the time spent, in each of these course, was in group discussions and role plays. These activities allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my previous experiences with conflict, to learn from other people and to practice the skills. The video segments, facilitator demonstrations and lectures, coupled with the interactive activities, all exposed me to viewpoints that were sometimes discrepant from my own. I allowed myself to be challenged and to look at conflict and

its resolution from different perspectives. Although I have found myself reflecting on my assumptions, outside the classroom, it is an activity that is easy not to do. I believe it would be beneficial if facilitators of conflict resolution training could incorporate activities that allow participants to articulate and then examine conscious and unconscious assumptions toward conflict. Such activities could help foster transformative learning.

My application of the skills I have learned has been limited to my personal life since I am currently not working outside the home. Learning how to actively listen and learning how to communicate my feelings and expectations in a non-confrontational manner has had a profound impact on how I interact with my spouse. My husband and I have also joined a transformative parenting project which is exploring how the principles of restorative justice (a non-violent alternative dispute resolution process) can be used in teaching parents how to discipline their children.

Since conflict is an inescapable and important aspect of everyone's life, it is a shame that many adults have not received training in how to effectively manage, resolve and even transform conflict. Literally, everyone can benefit from learning about interest-based conflict resolution. It is applicable in every occupation and every life role we occupy. I only wish that I had received this training as I was growing up! I am encouraged, however, by the work that appears to be happening within the public school system. Many children, even those in kindergarten, are participating in conflict resolution training. They are learning how to collaborate to solve problems. The training, in some cases, is also being reinforced at the elementary, junior high and senior high levels. As a parent and a citizen in today's society, I am thrilled that our young people are learning these valuable life skills. Hopefully, readers of my research will realize that it is never

too late to learn how to effectively deal with conflict. My study indicates that effective conflict resolution training, such as what is offered through the CCRS can help adults to: (1) develop more open and constructive views towards conflict, (2) enhance their communication and problem-solving skills, (3) learn to collaborate with others to achieve win-win outcomes and, (4) create positive changes in both their personal and professional lives.

In addition to my experiences as a participant in conflict resolution studies, I have taken some time to reflect on my experiences as a graduate student. It has definitely been a roller coaster of a ride!

I believe that the experience has had a profound impact on me. When I decided to pursue further education, one of my motives was to enhance my credentials. I am also an advocate for continuous learning. However, my key motivation was more personal in nature; I wanted to resolve an internal conflict with which I had been living for many years. I am not proud of the degree I received for my undergraduate studies. In my early twenties, I suffered a severe lack of self-confidence which I permitted to have a negative impact on my performance as a student. As a result I literally squeaked by, without actually learning much, and I received a piece of paper. Unfortunately, that piece of paper only represents my failure to apply myself (the degree remains rolled up in a canister to this day). Pursuing my graduate education has allowed me to challenge myself intellectually and it has offered me numerous opportunities to develop self confidence and resilience. More importantly, I have proven to myself that even if a goal seems insurmountable I have the will and the ability to overcome the obstacles and forge ahead even when my belief level waivers. An epiphany that I had, during the thesis process was that it is a sign of strength when one can ask for help. There was a stage in this process in which I was really struggling. I had

begun to doubt my ability to complete the work. I was finding it extremely lonely and very difficult. As a result, I began to procrastinate. Whenever I would attempt to write I would face indecision and a severe case of writers' block. It took everything in me to gather the courage to email my thesis advisor about my predicament. I am so grateful that I did. She emphasized that my experience was actually normal and she coached me on how to move forward.

One of the most profound life lessons that I will take from my experiences is that although independence may seem like a strength, it is actually more effective to realize that we are interdependent. Learning to collaborate with others in resolving conflict, even those conflicts that only exist in our minds, will enhance our ability to make positive changes in our lives and the lives of others.

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Appendix A
Course Offerings at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies:

Foundation:

Introduction to Conflict Resolution (Core Course)

Ethics in Conflict Resolution (Core Course)

Advanced Practice Seminar

Practicum (Core Course)

Understanding Conflict Through Personality Type

Compassion and Conflict

Resolution Dealing with Anger

Mediation and Negotiation Process:

Mediation Level II

Mediation Level III - Practice Seminar

Negotiation Level II

Mediation and Negotiation - Law-related Applications:

Effective Legal Counsel Advocacy in Mediation

Fundamentals of Mediation for Lawyers

Introduction to Restorative Justice

Mediation and Negotiation - Family and Workplace Applications:

Multi-Party Mediation

Designing Workplace Approaches to Conflict

Conflict Management for Teams

Dispute Resolution Skills for Managers

Family Mediation

Mediating Parenting Issues During Separation

Conciliation - Resolving Everyday Conflicts

Facilitation Process and Applications:

Basic Facilitation - A Six Module Series

Advanced Facilitation Practice Seminar

Effective Board Governance for Conflict Resolution

Public Processes for Resolving Complex Social Issues

Collaborative Problem Solving & Effective Meetings

General Interest Short Courses:

Chairing Effective Meetings

True Colors and Conflict Resolution

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Early Intervention and Prevention of Workplace Harassment

Appendix B

Six Step Problem-Solving Process

	Conflict Solving Steps	Skills Required
Step 1	**Set a positive Environment** ● Introductions/Welcome ● Describe your role and the process ● Confidentiality ● Ground Rules ● Powers of decision ● Agreement to continue	● Active listening ● Reframing
Step 2	**Identify and Reframe the Conflict** ● Invite parties to tell their stories ● Reframe the conflicts so it makes sense to both parties	● Probing questions ● Clarifying questions ● Active listening ● Summarizing ● Reframing
Step 3	**Identify & Explore Interests** ● Map the conflict by identifying the interests (needs and concerns) of each party.	● Interest exploring questions ● Clarifying questions ● Active listening ● Summarizing ● Interest-mapping
Step 4	**Identify the Issues Agenda** ● Explore the map to identify issues	● Probing questions
Step 5	**Generate Creative Options** ● Generate list of potential options ● Evaluate options and seek mutually satisfying solutions	● Brainstorming questions ● Summarizing ● Reframing
Step 6	**Verify and close the agreement**	● Consequential questions

(Handout, Introduction to Conflict Resolution course, September 2002)

Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. First, I would be interested in knowing how you became involved in conflict resolution studies.
2. How would you have described your perspective towards conflict and conflict resolution, prior to your studying conflict resolution.
3. Before you began actively learning about conflict and conflict resolution, how would you describe your typical reaction to conflict and your approach to conflict resolution in the work place?
4. Before you began actively learning about conflict and conflict resolution, how would you describe your typical reaction to conflict and your approach to conflict resolution in your home/personal life?
5. Have you noticed a change in your perspective towards conflict and conflict resolution? (If perceives changes) When did you first notice a change in your perspective? What was taking place? In your opinion, what did change?
6. How has your participation in conflict resolution courses affected you professionally?
7. If I followed you through a typical day at work:
   (A) What kinds of conflict would I see you experiencing?
   (B) What would I observe you doing?
   (C) Would you describe your behavior as being different or similar to what it was prior to your training?
8. Conflict is a natural part of our entire lives.
   (A) How do you feel the training affected you personally?
   (B) What kinds of changes in yourself do you see or feel as a result of your participation in conflict resolution training?
   (C) What would you say you got out of the experience of participating in this training?
   (D) How would you describe your current approach to conflict in your personal life?
9. Have there been any ways in which your participation in conflict resolution studies has affected you that we haven't discussed? (If yes) How? Would you elaborate on that?
10. What plans have you made, if any, to change anything or do anything differently as a result of your conflict training?
11. You have been very helpful. You have given me useful, interesting information with which to work. Do you have any other thoughts or feelings you might share with me to help me better understand your experience with conflict resolution training. Is there any thing you would like to add?

Appendix D

Statement of Informed Consent

I, _____ agree to participate in an interview that will focus on the learning experiences I've had as a result of my participation in various courses offered through the Centre of Conflict Resolution Studies at UPEI. I understand the following conditions:

- the interview will be conducted by Christine Clements, a Master of Education student at UPEI. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies is simply being used as the site for this study. The interview material will only be used in a written thesis report, an oral public defense and any published material resulting from the research;
- neither the director nor the faculty of the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies will be made aware of my participation in this study. My identity will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym that will be known only to Christine;
- the purpose of this study is to describe any changes in perspective that may have taken place for participants of conflict resolution training and to describe what impact, if any, the training has had on the participants' lives;
- the study involves one in-depth interview that will last approximately one hour and it will be audio taped and it will be scheduled at a time that is convenient to both the researcher and myself;
- only Christine will have access to the tape(s) from my interview. Another individual will be typing the written transcribed notes, however, I can have specific excerpts typed by Christine if requested;
- I will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed notes from my interview and to provide any necessary feedback. I will also be given the opportunity to discuss the themes and other findings, generated from the material of my interview;
- my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw from it at anytime without explanation. If I chose to withdraw, my actions will not have a negative impact on my relationship with the Centre of Conflict Resolution Studies director or course instructors, nor will it jeopardize my standing in the certificate program. I may decline to answer any question during the interview;
-
- I will not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study. The researcher has offered to answer any questions and respond to any comments I may have with regards to the study. The thesis, when completed, will be available for loan, should I want to review it;
- I have been given a copy of this form.

I understand and agree to participate in this study with the above conditions.

_____

Name (Please Print)

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix E

Letter of Explanation/Invitation

Date

Dear Course Participant,

I am a Masters of Education student at UPEI and I am conducting my thesis research on the impact of continuous learning, with a focus on conflict resolution training and education. The Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies (CCRS) at UPEI has granted me permission to use the Centre as a site for my research. This invitation is being extended to you because you have completed at least five of the courses included in the certification program. Please note that due to confidentiality issues, I was not given your name - the Centre simply sent out this package to all participants who have completed at least five courses relating to Conflict Resolution through the CCRS.

I am interested in listening to participants' thoughts, attitudes and perspectives with regards to the experiences they've had as a result of their participation in conflict resolution training. A random group of individuals, who are interested in participating in the study, will be selected for an interview, to be scheduled at their convenience.

I have provided you with a statement of informed consent that describes the conditions of the study. Once you have had a chance to review the statement of consent, please indicate whether you wish to participate in the study or not, by completing the appropriate sections of the response form. If you do not plan on participating, simply return the response form in the enclosed envelope. If you are interested in participating in my study, please sign one copy of the statement of consent and send it with your completed response form; the other copy of the statement of informed consent is for your records.

I would like to make it clear that the CCRS is not conducting this research and that if you should choose to participate, any specific information you provide, as well as your identity, will be kept strictly confidential.

Thank-you for taking the time to consider my invitation to participate in this study. So that I may move forward with my research, I would appreciate receiving your response by _____. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 628-8489.

Sincerely,

Christine Clements

Appendix F

Participant Response Form

Please circle the appropriate response:

I am not interested in participating in the research study

Yes, I am interested in participating in the research study.

If you are interested in participating please provide the following information:

Personal Data (Please print.) :

Name :_____

Mailing Address :_____

Phone Number : (Daytime) _____ (Evening) _____
(Please indicate the most convenient time for you to be contacted.)

Courses completed at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies :

Course	Date Completed

Appendix G
Transcript Verification

Date

Dear (Participant's name),

Please review the enclosed transcript of the interview we had on (Date of interview) (You will notice that a pseudonym was used to protect confidentiality.) As you read it, please feel free to make any corrections and/or comments in the margins of the transcript or on separate paper. Having you verify the information in the transcript is an important aspect of my thesis in that it gives it more validity. Once you have completed your verification, please sign the bottom of this page. If you make any additions to the transcript, please place the verification form inside the transcript.

I will contact you during the week of _____ to answer any questions you might have and to arrange a convenient time that I may pick up the transcript and your verification. If we decide that it would be easier for you to mail it to me, I will send you a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If, on the other hand, you do not make any additions, you could simply fax the signed consent form to me If you happen to finish verifying the transcript before that time, please give me a call

Your participation in this study is very much appreciated. I will let you know when my thesis has been completed and how you may gain access to a copy for your perusal.

Sincerely,

Christine Clements

I have verified that this is an accurate transcript of the interview I had with Christine Clements on Date of interview

_____ _____

Signature Date