Conflict Resolution in a Halifax Elementary School

By

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Abstract

  This thesis is an ethnographic study of conflict and conflict resolution at a Halifax elementary school. It describes the skills and techniques that students are taught at the school to handle their conflicts and the ethnomethods they actually use to resolve conflict with their peers. Using ethnoconflictology (Lederach 1998) as a framework for analysis, this thesis applies anthropological definitions of conflict, common sense, and local reality to understand the conflict resolution practices in the school. The practices presented are broken down into categories of institutional and operational conflict resolution for analysis. The participating research school is a Christian private school in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and as such the influence of Christianity on their conflict resolution practices is also discussed. Conflict resolution and anthropology do not often cross in academic work, and therefore this thesis contributes to a new and growing body of ethnographic studies of conflict resolution.

Contents

Figures

1. Introduction

Conflict resolution and anthropology are two fields that have not frequently crossed paths. When conflict resolution experts consider anthropology, they find a definition of culture that is too broad and unstable to use in analysis of cultural difference during conflict. On the other hand, when anthropology considers conflict resolution, the latter is too prescriptive in its use of dichotomies like war/peace and violent/non-violent to be able to apply the definitions cross-culturally. Anthropologists are wary of the one-size-fits-all models of conflict resolution that may be presented in practice. However, there is common ground between these two fields. Ethnographies of conflict resolution allow for critical analysis of local understandings of conflictive behaviour and resolution processes, as well as the common sense that guides the community through these things. An ethnography allows both the conflict resolution expert and the anthropologist to find and use community-centered methods of resolving conflicts. The more ethnographies that are written with this purpose, the more information there will be available to people trying to resolve conflicts in their everyday lives.

This paper is one such ethnography. It uses a cultural relativistic approach to analyse the conflict resolution practices of one community. However, instead studying a whole community, I have chosen to focus on an elementary school where "locals" are children still in the process of learning the common sense and conflict resolution processes of their communities, and the staff who are trying to teach these things. Most schools don't only teach academic subjects but also "indoctrinate pupils into a specific moral code" (Lancy 2008, 312), Trinity Elementary, where research was conducted, is an

example of such a school. Students learn from their schools, not only math and science, but also what is considered appropriate ways to interact and communicate with their community members. Such social learning is prominent at Trinity Elementary because the school is based in the Christian faith and it plays a significant role in maintaining consistent lesson of morality at school.

The intellectual and moral components of school need to be intertwined equally in order to education students and prepare them for the rest of their lives (Cannon 2011). To that end, a school acts as an intermediator between the adults and the children of a community, which teaches them the skills they need to succeed. At the same time, however schools are also a mirco-society unto themselves (Calhoun 1976). They have their own institutions, values, beliefs, practices, and customs, in which the students are some of the most significant actors.

In both contexts, schools as micro-societies and as part of a bigger society, this paper asks and attempts to answer the following questions: how are children learning to resolve their conflicts? and how are students actually resolving those conflicts? Is there a difference between what they are taught and what they do?

To answer these questions, I spent two months with students at Trinity Elementary School in Nova Scotia, Canada. I observed students in grades three to five while they were in class and on the playground, and recorded behaviours of conflict and of conflict resolution in practice and as it was being taught theoretically. In addition, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with the three teachers of the classes I observed, as

well as the Dean of Students, who is responsible for discipline (among other things) at the school.

The next chapter contains a description of Trinity school and the context in which it is situated. As stated, Trinity is a Christian private school that emphasises religion in dedicated classes as well as throughout their daily routines. Christianity becomes an important aspect of analysis into order to understand the influences of conflict resolution at the school in that is helps the teachers and students to understand concepts such as love and anger. It also plays a major role in how the students are being socialized to interact with each other. Further, this chapter details the five goals of the school, which create a foundation and standard for teaching and learning in the school.

Chapter Three covers previous work done in conflict and conflict resolution, as well as anthropology's perspectives on the topic. This section also introduces the concept of ethnoconflictology and ethnomethods as a framework for analysis. An ethnomethod in this context is the localized common sense way of resolving conflict used within a community. Throughout this thesis, conflict and conflict resolution are considered to be cultural processes that demand cultural relativity to be fully understood. Conflict and conflict resolution are created and maintained through local perceptions of reality and notions of common sense. This chapter goes on to define aspects of Trinity's conflict resolution ethnomethods. First, with a discussion of emotional regulation and second on conversational spaces.

Chapter Four presents the ethnographic data from Trinity which categorizes the ways conflict resolution is taught and used at Trinity, as well as how it relates back to the

theory previously discussed. Conflict resolution methods are broken down into two categories, institutional and operational. The former is further broken down into foundational and teacher valued, and it includes the values and methods that Trinity is trying to teach its students through direct discussion and curriculum, and indirectly through teachers modelling behaviour. This section also includes a discussion on how the definition of good behaviour is determined at Trinity, and the power dynamics that are included in making that determination in a school setting. Often schools are idealized as spaces of happy learners with very little conflict (Souto-Manning 2013). However, the kind of peace created in such a setting is called a negative peace. It maintains the status quo and doesn't encourage critical thinking and learning. Positive peace, on the other hand, is one that uses conflicts in the classroom to build new norms and expectations of both students and teachers. The ways conflict is handled in the classroom will inform children of the ways they should handle conflict in the rest of their lives as well (Sandy 2014).

In contrast to institutional conflict resolution, Operational conflict resolution discusses the ways that students interact with each other and their ethnomethods for resolving conflicts. These do not always match the methods that are taught by the school but as children get older they begin to favour of the skills the school is teaching.

Chapter Five asks why the research matters, and discusses how it contributes to movements within anthropology and conflict resolution. Finally, Chapter Six draws conclusions to the information presented, as well as presents possible research questions for future work.

2. The Trinity School Community

The research for this project was conducted at Trinity School[i], a private school located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The school hosts students from junior primary all the way to grade 12, and consists of an elementary school, a senior boys' school and a senior girls' school. Research was conducted in the elementary school which includes the grade primary to grade six in co-ed classes. The maximum class size in each is 20 students, though most classrooms for the younger grades have fewer than that. Currently, there are two classes of each grade primary through five and, three classes of grade six. My field work was spent with one class from each of grades three, four, and five.

A typical school day starts between 8 and 8:30 when students are dropped off and before class begins. During this time, as students arrive, they settle into their classrooms and spend their time playing with Lego, puzzles, or other materials with their friends. Some days, they may also read or finish homework. Students are in classes from 8:30 until 9:50. First recess is until 10:10. Following this, they return to class, where they remain until lunch at 11:30 am until 12:30pm. Students have one more recess break at 1:50 to 2:00 p.m. In the winter, the students do not go outside for this short recess. The day ends at either 3 or 3:30, depending on the grade level and day of the week.

The grade three class is taught by Mr. Martin. He teaches 14 students, ages eight and nine. The students' desks are arranged in rows facing the front white board and there is a semi-circle desk in the back where Mr. Martin works individually with students when the situation warrants. Everyday Mr. Martin writes on a small white board that is attached

to the door the happenings of that day and who the Teacher's Assistant (TA) is for the day. The TA sits at the back of the room in an office desk chair for the day and assists the teacher with small things like handing out papers or retrieving things from other places in the school.

Mrs. King teaches 16 students in her grade four class. In December these students also sat in rows facing the front, however in January they reorganized to sit in a horseshoe shape with four desks in the middle. In this class there are eight jobs that are given to different students every Monday. Some include door holders, brush cleaners (for the chalk board), and paper passers. There is a piece of chart paper hung on the wall that is titled "Respect Is…" and has a list of seven statements which include "share belongings," "kind words," and "listen to each other." In this classroom there is also a sacred space (see Figure 1) that is kept clean of anything else. Here there are posters and pictures that relate to the religious ethos of the school.

Figure 1: Sacred Space in Grade Four Classroom

6

Finally, there are 20 students in the grade five class taught by Mr. Jackson, or Mr. Jack as the students call him. He is the youngest teacher I interviewed and has only been at the school for a few years. At the beginning of the year Mr. Jackson's class made a class constitution which hangs on their wall by the door. It has eight statements on it, all of which start with "We value." Some include, "We value being ourselves so we be silly when we can," and another is "We value leadership, so we be the bigger person when we have an argument." These students also sit in a horseshoe formation facing the front board and sit in a different order every month.

The school is like any community, they have morals, beliefs, and structures that guide their words, choices, and actions. At the school, this manifests at its highest level in the way of the five School Goals. The goals are as follows;

1. A personal and active faith in God;
2. A deep respect for intellectual values;
3. Social awareness that impels to action;
4. The building of Community as a Christian value;
5. Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.

These goals are posted in several places in the school on official plaques, as well as in hand drawn on poster boards on the walls of classrooms.

The goals, particularly the first and the third, demonstrate the way Christianity plays an integral role in the daily lives of the students and the staff. Every grade level in the elementary has regular religion class in which they learn the stories and lessons of the Bible. They pray together as a class every morning and frequently discussion the love of

Jesus Christ, one of their founding tenants. Additionally, all students attend a monthly mass ceremony during class time and grade levels take turns preparing and leading the ceremony by writing devotionals and taking on different roles like lighting candles and controlling a slide show. The community that is built "as a Christian value" at Trinity, draws heavily on principles of kindness and love. Teachers frequently talk about teaching from a place of love and tell students they should play together in loving ways.

The Trinity community understands love as it is defined in the Bible. As Mrs. King put it, "The whole, of what we are founded on is the love of Jesus Christ and God." Love in this context is being kind, caring, and patient, even when one is angry or ready to give up on someone else with no expectation.

Some of the passages from the bible on love include: "He who does not love does not know God, for God is Love" (1 John 4:8 [KJV]); "If someone says 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother who he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him. That he who loves God must love his brother" (1 John 4:20-21 [KJV]); and one of the most cited verses on love "Love is patient love is kind. It does not envy, it does no boast, it is not proud" (Cor. 13:4 [NIV]). The love the Bible speaks about is one that comes before all other emotions, in fact it is beyond an emotion itself. Rather it is an assumed state of mind that prefaces any interaction (Albig 2019). The concept of "coming fromm a place of love" is emphasised by the teachers I observed when they interact with their students.

In and outside of the classroom at Trinity, this concept of love is grounded in the way they interact and love each other in the community. They know that God has love for

each one of them, and they must treat each other in a similar way. God's love, by this definition, guides the actions of teachers and events that happen at the school. During an assembly in early December, the principal, Mr. Parsons, asked his students, "If we could only have one rule at school, what should that rule be to make sure we continue to safely learn and grow here at school?" A grade three girl answered, "Love?" and Mr. Parsons replied, "Love – loving and being kind to one another. Exactly! That is most important in our school. We know we will be successful at everything else we do if we have love." This exchange exemplifies much of this discourse at the school outside.

The teachers I observed taught from a foundation of love, and in doing so were often quite strict with their students. They have high expectations of their students to treat each other, teachers and their environment with respect. For example, Mrs. King expects her students to always have a clean desk. "There should not be any loose papers in your desks," she told the children. This became a problem for some students. A small group of boys in her class enjoy drawing pictures on scrap paper in their free time and these papers end up randomly scattered throughout their desks. Mrs. King gave them each a folder as a place to put those drawings, however Toby had a hard time keeping them in the folder. Before recess the students were tidying their desks and Mrs. King had Toby stay behind while everyone else went outside until his desk was clean. She explained to Toby the importance of having a clean workspace and that he needed to respect his own space.

Teachers are also strict about the ways students treat each other. In her interview, Mrs. King told me, "We expect them to be kind, and we are strict about it…we also give positive reinforcement when they do the right thing." Students are frequently praised for

their efforts, both in formal and informal ways. I often observed teachers thanking students for doing assigned jobs well or sharing with their friends. There are also special assemblies that recognize students' good behaviour and academic achievements.

At the school, every teacher at the school knows every child's name, and the teachers often confer with each other about how the children are doing. Once a week there is a staff meeting during which they talk about student behaviour so that all teachers know who to keep an eye out for and what kind of expectations to hold for those students. When students in the grade four went to French class one day, Mrs. King pulled the French teacher aside and told her that she felt Tristan was having a particularly hard time focusing on his work that day and distracting other students. The French teacher then gave Tristan extra attention that day to make sure he was staying on task and often told him to stop talking to the girl sitting next to him. Each time she explained to him that it was disrespectful to distract the other students.

Mr. Jackson was also strict with his students regarding the ways the interacted with each other. Before starting a group activity, he asked his students, "So let's lay some ground rules before we begin. What should I see when you are working in your groups?" Some of the student responses included, cooperation, taking turns, listening to everyone if there is an argument, and asking for help. When the students got started on their tasks, Mr. Jackson would frequently remind them of their suggestions and make sure they were following them. He was strict in making sure the students knew the expectations put on them for the assignment and followed through to make sure they were following the rules.

There are several other features that help to build the school's sense of community. First is their school uniforms. All students have three uniforms. The most commonly worn is their daily uniform of a cotton shirt and dress pants for the boys or skirts for the girls. They also have a gym uniform of T-shirts and sweatpants or shorts they may wear on days they have physical education class. Finally, they have a formal uniform, which they wear on special occasions like ceremonies.

Trinity students also have morning assemblies every Tuesday and Thursday. Every assembly starts with a prayer and continues with announcements from teachers regarding ongoing activities like a Lego challenge or food drive, and safety announcements like telling students to stay off the ice on the playground. Following announcements, students' birthdays and half birthdays are announced and everyone sings happy birthday in English and in French. The assembly ends with the singing of "Oh Canada." The Principal closes every ceremony by saying, "Rock on boys and girls!" and the students respond with "Rock on Mr. Parsons!"

The Trinity Elementary community has been built on a backbone of tradition, faith, and active learning of social skills. Students are constantly asked to actively engage with their community. Some students are on a student counsel, grade fives are responsible for making sure the primary students line up after recess, and guess speakers come to the school to talk about the important role God can play in their lives. All of these things create a strict and supportive network for the students to meet learning outcomes and socialize into active citizens at the school.

3. Conflict, Conflict Resolution, and Anthropology

The Study of Conflict

For a long time, the field of conflict resolution has been dominated by sociologists, psychologists, and education specialists; anthropology has only recently taken a step into the field. Anthropologists bring their cultural perspective to conflict and conflict resolution and are creating new knowledge of the ways people interact with each other and cross-cultural understanding.

Conflict can have an array of definitions and forms. These may include interpersonal, intragroup, or transnational; armed, or not armed; institutional or personal differences. Anthropologists in the past have focused their attention on a wide range of conflict such as social group conflict and the ethnographic relationship between nature and nurture (Kyrou and Rubinstein 2008). For the sake of this research, the definition of conflict has been narrowed down into the day-to-day conflicts that arise between individuals, small groups, or individuals and groups on a daily basis. These conflicts are often interpersonal in nature and can be based on task-oriented problems, disagreements in beliefs such as religion, or other similar problems that can cause controversy in the community (Shonk 2018). This definition has been chosen because these conflicts are common among children and easiest to observe and accurately analyse in this short-term study.

Conflict, on any scale, is a cultural process (Hydle 2006; Rogoff 2003). The causes of conflict and the way conflict occurs over time follow norms and reflect structures of

the society in which it is happening. Societies produce patterns of behaviour that are predictable for the people of that society (von Benda-Beckman and Pirie 2007). For example, white American culture tends to favour and focus on individualism which puts greater emphasis on conflictive behaviour patterns: who said or did what, and how someone else reacted to the situation (Ellis 2018). It can then be assumed that, through similar processes, conflict resolution is also culturally based. Patterns of values, behaviours, and institutional practices guide a community through the expected and culturally appropriate ways of managing conflicts.

A study of conflict resolution in North America, resulted in a series of oppositions that detail the six dimensions of conflict response. They include: conflict avoidance – conflict involvement; hard (aggressive) – soft (unassertive); Rigid – loose in organization and control; intellectual – emotional; escalating – minimizing; compulsive revealing – compulsive concealing (Deutsch 1992). It is thought that everyone will fall somewhere within each opposition and that makes up their predisposition to responding to conflict. However, these oppositions are context specific and cannot be apply cross-culturally. The oppositions are individualistic in nature, focusing on a single person's reaction to a situation. In contrast, the Urapmin people of Papua New Guinea, live as subsistence farmers in which everyone has a role in maintenance of group well-being. Social norms and behaviours therefore orient towards a relationalism within the community instead of individualism (Robbins 2002). It can be assumed that the oppositions of conflict responses could not apply to traditional Urapmin society. Conflict resolution practices

within a community are therefore created within a specific socio-historic and cultural context.

Not only are conflict and conflict resolution culturally mediated, but so are human experiences of reality. One cannot experience a conflict without first filtering it through one's perception, which itself is socially constructed. For one group of people anger may be a negative emotion, while for others it may be positive (Avruch and Black 1991). Every person's perception has been shaped by a great number of factors, including family, friends, institutions, language, and physical environment and others that have a role in socialization. Socialization is the foundation that shapes "the boundaries of action and the rules of engagement," (Antonacopoulou and Güttel 2010) of people interacting within a community. Therefore, people who are proximally and relationally close, are likely to have similar socialization and similar social perceptions.

This relationship of socialization, and perceived reality produce local forms of common sense. "Humans use locally received and constructed common sense to perceive, interpret, evaluate, and act on… reality," (Avruch and Black 1991, 31). Common sense guides people on how to have and socially manage a conflict.

Gramsci's (1971) definition of common sense is "a chaotic aggregate of disparate conception, and one can find there anything that one likes," (422). We can use this unsystematic definition as a means of thinking about all of the taken-for-granted aspects of the social world.

> "[It] offers anthropologists a way of thinking about the texture of everyday
> life that encompasses its givenness – how it is both constitutive of our

subjectivity and confronts us as an external and solid reality – but that also acknowledges its contradictions, fluidity and flexibility," (Crehan 2011, 286).

Using Gramsci's definition, we can situate common sense, reality and conflict resolution within a specific socio-cultural context. A community's common sense is part of the cultural fabric that make up their every day and is developed through processes socialization. To explain we can consider the stark contrast between the Waorani of Ecuador (especially before the early 1970) and the Semai of Malaysia. Both communities were hunter gatherers, and swidden gardeners with similar crops, technologies, and kindship patterns. The differences, however in worldview and the resulting sociocultural patterns of behaviour regarding conflict resolution (Robarchek and Robarchek 1994).

In the Semai's reality the world is inherently hostile and dangerous and therefore "people are dependent on the nurturance and support of other for their very survival and this support is to be found only in the kindred and band" (Robarchek and Robarchek 1994, 67). As a result of such a world view, at the first sign of conflict, the Semai enact complex, community-based, conflict resolution processes because a peaceful community unit is the only way to survive. For the Semai, it makes common sense to address conflicts immediately otherwise they risk putting themselves in danger. The Waorani, on the other hand, perceive the reality of the world as there for their purposes and a person's survival within it is their own responsibility with little help from others. This translated into conflict responses that involve very little formal mechanisms or community involvement. Allowed to escalate, there is little choice in violent conflict and common

sense creates limited options in such situations. One can "surrender, retreat, threaten, or attack" (72).

The purpose of making an example of the Waorani and the Semai is to show how common sense develops from and is part of a cultural context and perceived reality. While in similar situations politically and economically, the two groups have a wide gap between their world views which has implications on the ways they choose to process conflict in their communities.

A more localized example is when two children are in a bullying related conflict. Some parents tell their children to stand up for themselves and punch the bully back, while others use the familiar mantra, "if you ignore them, they will get bored and go away." In both cases, what is considered common sense for dealing with the conflict is in accordance with one's socialized perception of the world. A slight difference in the world view of the two parents, leads to an incredibly different response to the conflict at school.

In order to situate common sense, perceptions of reality and conflict resolution into the socio-cultural context of Trinity, I will use an approach called ethnoconflictology. Coined by John Lederach, it is "the study of how people make sense of conflictive situation and appropriate 'common sense' methods of resolving them" (Lederach 1998, 166). In other words, it takes a cultural-relativistic approach to understanding the cultural processes that are involved in conflict resolution.

Lederach's (1998) work titled, "Of Net, Nails, and Problems: The Folk Language of Conflict Resolution in a Central American Setting," is an anthropological study of

conflict resolution in Costa Rica. He studies their "conflict-talk" in order to describe native understandings of conflict. He considers conflicts to be:

> "one of the most intriguing and complex social accomplishments we humans construct, [which] calls forth a lifetime of knowledge about what is right and wrong to do, how to proceed, whom to turn to, when, where, and with what expectations… how this social phenomenon is understood and accomplished, however, varies from one cultural setting to another (166).

He points out in his study that "communication skills" are always stressed in conflict resolution training, and so knowing exactly what that means is important. In this Puntarenas community, people generally use language like "entangled" in problems or disputes, and therefore the resolution is about "getting out" of the entanglement. There are different ways, or cultural paths, but not techniques according to Lederach, to get in and out of conflicts which are all culturally specific to the cultural history of the community. These ways he calls ethnomethods, because of their taken-for-granted nature. The ethnomethods to get out of conflict for the Puntarenas people included three steps: "*ubicarse* (get my bearings); *platicar* (talk, dialogue); and *arreglar* (manage, arrange, and fix)" (171, italics in original). Through a multifaceted use of these three steps people get out of conflict in their communities.

The goal of my research is to discover the taken-for-granted methods or cultural paths the Trinity school community uses to resolve their conflicts. What are the common sense ways of resolving conflict among the students and staff? Trinity's ethnomethods derive from their health curriculum and Christianity, which both provide world views upon which conflict responses can be based upon. The methods that are most commonly

used by the children are negotiation, reconsideration, and asking for adult assistance. The ones being promoted by the school and teachers are emotional regulation and conversational spaces.

Trinity's ethnomethods will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four and the discussion will continue to draw on features described here. Conflict resolution as a cultural process always one to analysis ethnographic data on conflict using an ethnoconflictology approach. This allows for the use of local socialization of reality and common sense, in order to understand how people get in and out of conflict in a community.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is a fairly new field of academic research and, as a field, it tends to be dominated by a Western value system and contains a bias towards a Euro-American point of view, particularly when it comes to teaching conflict resolution and peace education in schools (see Johnson and Johnson 1995; Johnson and Johnson 2014; Sandy 2014; Heydenberk and Heydenberk 2007; Delpit 2006; van Gurp 2002; Adams 1994). Conflict resolution as a practice is dependent on the values and beliefs of a community. Communities have their own set of 'right' social values and methods of instilling them in new generations (Fechter 2019). These methods, as has been discuss, develop from cultural context and common sense. Yet, one has to create and value a particular definition of peace in order to use Conflict resolution in school as is it presented in

18

academic scholarship. As such, it does not take into consideration different cultural interpretations of concepts likes conflict, conflict resolution, and peace. Ultimately, conflict resolution as a discipline lacks cultural relativism.

Cultural relativism has a long history for creating debate among people in and outside of academia, which Michael Brown (2008) has summarized quite efficiently in his article "Cultural Relativism 2.0." Here I do not need to replicate the debate, rather I wish to draw on one component of cultural relativism that Brown identifies. That is a methodological relativism. In this sense, relativism allows a researcher to "suspend judgement until a belief or practice can be understood within its total context" (367). The idea is that one cannot fully understand a concept that is native to a socio-cultural context outside there own, and therefore must remove their own biases to the best of their abilities in order to research it.

Lila Abu-Lughood (2002) makes a case for relativism in her article "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" In it, she argues the need for cultural relativism when discussing women and the War on Terror. She finds that oppression of women, which is iconized as a veil, means something completely different to the people of the West, who are claiming to save the women from oppression, than it does to the women who are "being saved." She states,

> Did we expect that once "free" from the Taliban they would go "back"
> to belly shirts and blue jeans, or dust off their Chanel suits? We need
> to be more sensible about the clothing of "women of cover," and so
> there is perhaps a need to make some basic points about veiling (785).

She goes on to explain, that where the West sees the veil as a symbol of oppression, in local contexts, it allows people to participate in public life "while still observing the basic moral requirements of separating and protecting women from unrelated men" (785). She argues that we need to have a more relativistic understanding of women's movements and the paths they take outside of the Western notion or freedom and even women.

Similarly, if one were to try to apply the conflict resolution theories and scholarship that exists today to a society outside the "developed world" a similar problem would arise. Not everyone has the same notion of conflict, and therefore one cannot expect all people to use the same ethnomethods to resolve it.

That said, the theories produced from conflict resolution literature will help to understand the cultural context of Trinity. The school is situated in the urban capital of Nova Scotia, Canada, similar to common locations of studies in conflict resolution. The school charges high rates of tuition for its education and therefore the majority of students who attend come from similar high socio-economic households. Many of the theories are written with the intention that they will be applied, in theory and practice, to schools like Trinity. Accordingly, the theories that follow in this section take a side step from anthropological research; however, they will help to create an anthropological understanding of the efforts of Trinity to implement and teach conflict resolution at their school by applying them to my ethnographic notes from the school.

The definition of conflict resolution, like any other definition, is up for debate. Generally, it refers to the methods and processes used to bring an end to a conflict peacefully. There are several current buzz words associated with learning and teaching

the techniques of conflict resolution. Some of these include peace education, social justice, restorative approaches, reconciliation and conflict resolution itself. Each of these teach and use similar techniques for managing different levels of conflicts. There is an endless list of skills and methods that are consistently emphasised by proponents of each of these concepts. However, two are present in the foundation of all of them and are frequently emphasized and practiced at Trinity. These are emotional regulations (particularly emphasising empathy), and hearing and allowing space for all opinions and identities.

Emotional regulation means being able to be aware and in control of one's emotions during different situations. "*Emotion regulation* is the use of cognitive, behavioral, and/or physiological processes to modulate emotional experiences (e.g., valence, intensity, or time course) and/or to direct concomitant behaviors such as facial or vocal expressions," (Ellis 2018, 190, italics in original). Conflict resolution education tends to focus on emotions like anger and impatience. "Emotions… support and nurture social communication… and motivate behaviour," (189), and as such it becomes vital in conflict resolution theory to maintain control over one's emotions in order to have open, honest, and productive conversations towards peace.

Emotions are a combination of biological, psychological, and socio-cultural processes. They are based on meeting the primordial needs of humans (like fear in flight or fight) but are socially and culturally influenced and conditioned. This means our emotions are context dependent. One society might view spiders as something to fear, or at least avoid, while another may see them a source of food; each scenario enacts different

emotions (Lindner 2014). Scheer (2012) turns to Bourdieu's *habitus* to understand emotions as a social practice. The argument is that emotions as practices have a socio-cultural history that is not static and timeless but rather socially situated, adaptive, and trained. Further, "the occasion, expression, and meaning of emotion are personal and particular" (Beatty 2014, 555). No two people experience emotion in the same way, even if they both label the emotion the same way. Therefore, in order to understand emotions of the people in a community we need both long term socio-cultural context and the personal context in which one is feeling a particular emotion.

It is important to acknowledge emotions as social because emotional regulation depends on emotional training and learning in order to self-regulate behaviours. Emotional regulation asks people to recognize when they feel any given emotion and ask themselves why they are feeling that way. Further, it is asking the individual to control their emotion, and the resulting behaviour, in order to have a conversation with the conflicting party or parties. Being able to identify and manage emotions, particularly negative ones, gives people the tools to be able to face conflict in their lives.

Cultural relativity needs to be applied to emotional regulation as well. While emotional regulation is valued in white North American conflict resolution, this is not the case in all cultural processes of conflict resolution. Kochman (1981) notes that the approach to negotiation taken by black Americans is markedly different from that of white Americans, especially in terms of emotionality. In his study he found that white people believe emotions need to be left out of negotiation procedures, and that it is a person's responsibility to control their own emotions. In contrast, black people did not see

this as a necessity to properly negotiate, rather emotion is a normal part of negotiation and it would not make common sense to remove it.

Trinity takes on an approach in which emotional regulation is important to negotiation. According to the Dean of Students, the school uses a program called zones of regulation in which students are asked to take a moment to think about how they feel that day and colours are assigned different levels of emotions. Green is how you feel on typically day, blue is sad, whereas red is you are very upset or angry. In doing so they have the students practice identifying their own emotions and reflecting on what they can do to change situation to get themselves back to feeling in the green zone.

Further, emotional regulation is key to the second skill valued in Trinity's conflict resolution: the need for a "safe"[ii] space or conversational space where each person's emotions, opinions and identities are respected by all others. Such conversational spaces can be created for all kinds of conflicts and the more practice one has with them the better one will be at operating in such a situation, if the need arises. Trinity students have much experience as these types of conversations as they happen frequently in their classrooms. For example, the grade fives have "campfire" every Friday afternoon, which they the students engage in open conversation about how they feel that week and anything that bothered them. These types of conversations can break down negative stereotypes and validate opinions, even within the context of disagreement.

It is vital in these conversational spaces that the legitimacy of every participant's position is maintained with dignity and respect (Feuerverger, 2009). There are several other characteristics and goals of conversational spaces. Three that are particularly

important and common to most spaces are well presented in the School for Peace program which works with Jewish and Arab youth in order to promote peace in Israel and Palestine. The last three of their objectives when hosting what Zak, in Feuerverger, calls Peace Encounters are:

> 3. to make the participants aware of their ability to select their attitude toward the conflict, to influence their lives and their surroundings, and thus to help mitigate the conflict.
>
> 4. to bring the participants to choose non-discriminatory positions and modes of behaviour and to give legitimacy to all peoples' needs, rights, and aspirations.
>
> 5. to give the participants an opportunity to experience cooperation between the sides (5).

In this model, all participants are asked to open their mind to the position of the other side and give legitimacy to their feelings, whether or not they believe their reaction is correct. When they all listen to each other, they are better able to come to a solution. However, as soon as one person, or group of people, feel their side of the story is not being heard, the process is at risk of falling apart. Conversational space require practice because they ask participants to take on a relativistic position themselves in order to understand and empathize with the people on the other side of the conflict. To be successful one must remove the assumptions they have made about the conflict and be willing to accept facts about the events as they were presented by the other side, only then does everyone feel their story has been heard in totality and can progress begin to be made.

At Trinity, they are teaching their students to have such a conversation in this type of setting. The design of these conversational spaces is to promote dialogue between people who otherwise won't speak their point of view. Encouraging dialogue during a

conflict, between two students for example, allows for the possibility was reducing anger. The process helps to maintain relationships with peers and a positive learning environment, as per Trinity school goal number five.

The methods Trinity is teaching their students follow closely to the theories of emotional regulation and conversational spaces that conflict resolution literature presents. While such theories need to treated with cultural relativity, they can be helpful as a point of analysis for understanding Trinity conflict resolution methods. Students frequently practice emotional regulation in conversational space so that they are able to take advantage of the technique when they have a real conflict to deal with. The methods described in this section become the ethnomethods that Trinity students learn from their teachers. The ethnographic data of the student's using these methods is presented in the next chapter.

4. Conflict Resolution at Trinity School

In order to conduct an analysis of the conflict resolution used at Trinity, it is helpful to conceptualize social structures that exist there. There is a duality that exists within the structures that reinforce conflict resolution at Trinity. In one structure there are the ways the school uses its curriculum and teaching staff to promote a particular set of values associated with conflict resolution. In the other there are the ways students actually interact with each other on a daily basis. In order to better conceptualize this duality, it is helpful to break the conflict resolution practices of the school into categories. Figure 2 helps to visualize the structure. At the bottom are the *Foundational* and *Teacher Valued* categories which, when considered together, make up *Institutional Conflict Resolution,* which are the values, beliefs, and practices that are infused in the essence of the school's teaching goals. At the top is the *Operational Conflict Resolution,* which is the actual ways students resolve or end their conflicts. These have been placed on an inverted pyramid because students have more conflict resolution methods than only the ones that are taught by the school.

The two structures are not mutually exclusive. What happens in one often can affect what is going on in the other. Most often, the teachings of the institution changes the way students deal with conflict as they grow up in its systems. This being said, the institutional and operational conflict resolution have different purposes and functions. The institutional structure focuses more on official forms of conflict resolution while the operational structure focuses more on conflict itself and resolution is not as commonly proactive.
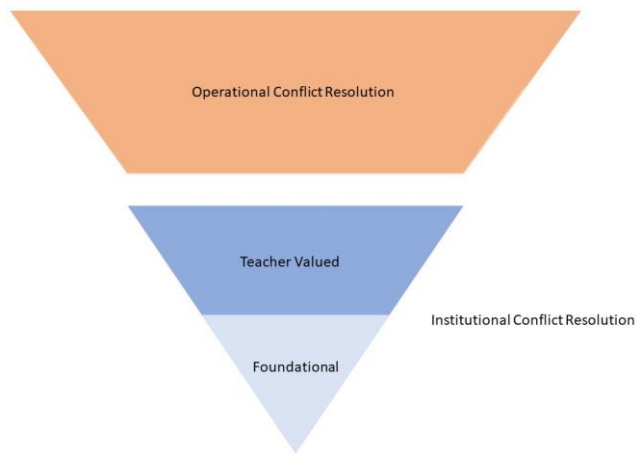
Figure 2: A Model of Conflict Resolution at Trinity School

Institutional Conflict Resolution – Foundation

Institutional conflict resolution begins with the formal foundation of what is taught as part of the school curriculum. At Trinity this includes the curriculum in health and religion classes. It also includes the use of ceremonies and assemblies as a means of communication and positive reinforcement. The foundation promotes the skills that are needed to successfully participate in the idealized methods of conflict resolution at the school.

To begin, we can turn to a scenario from my field work. One day in mid-December the grade four students were preparing for their Bible ceremonies. The ceremony is when everyone in the grade receives their own personal Bible to be used for study in and outside of Religion class. The ceremony is an important event for the students and the

school. The school administration attended, the headmistress invited other Sisters to speak to the students, and parents came to watch and take pictures of their students receiving their Bibles. In the follow days after the ceremony the students had opportunities to personalize their Bibles by filling out the contact information at the beginning and creating book marks for their favourite passages. In class students learned to take care and pride in their own Bibles.

Before the ceremony, every student in the grade had a role in the ceremony; some read bible verses, while others helped with the opening sing along. The two classes gathered in the cafeteria to rehearse during class time. Before they went, Mrs. King told the students to bring with them something to work on, like their math worksheets or silent reading books. It was stressed to the students that they needed to be working silently so others could rehearse. Three boys were sitting together in the back of room. They were laughing about something that happened at recess time. Mrs. King shushed the boys twice, asking them to quiet down. The third time she said in stern voice but without shouting, "Boys, you are talking too much. I'm not sure you should be sitting together. So, I want you to think of goal number five, 'personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.' If you think you can sit there you need to be working silently. If you don't think you can do that, you should make the decision to separate yourselves." The boys turned back to their table and did their work quietly for the rest of the rehearsal.

From this example, one immediately sees the importance of Christianity in the school curriculum in that the Bible ceremony was an important event and class time was dedicated to preparing for it. Trinity's history, pedagogy, and goals are based on the Christian faith, although the school accepts students from any belief system. Trinity is

one sister school of a large network of private schools across the world. The first school was founded by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat who believed that a holistic education which included spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social learning and development, could transform society. Every Trinity school around the world emphasises the values represented by the five goals listed above, and the importance of a spiritual education.

The teachings of Christianity that are most heavily drawn upon in the school that relate to conflict resolution are kindness, empathy and love. These three traits are most significant in the institutional structure. Mrs. King, in her interview, said that the lessons in their religion class curriculum and activities play a strong role in teaching students about conflict resolution. She said that in religion class they learn about how they are expected to treat other people, friends and strangers alike. Every morning in their homeroom classes or assembly, students stand and say their morning prayers. In doing so, teachers expect the students to think beyond themselves and pray for other people. The students often pray for their families, strangers, and their school community. Further, once a month all students have a mass, which the classes take turns organizing. Throughout December, religion classes put an emphasis on the importance of Christmas as a time of year to help the less fortunate and love family.

In the example, the students are participating in a Bible ceremony during which they receive their own personal Bible for study at school. It is an important milestone in the child's Christian education, so much so that parents came to the ceremony and pictures were taken during the event. The Bible that has been given out in the last two years is called the Adventure Bible (Figure 3). It was a full colour version that included

extra information about what it was like to live during the time period and other fun-fact-style sections. One of the full-page excerpts in the middle was titled, "Bible verses to read when I feel:" and gave example emotions with a short list of verses for each. For example, one listed for feeling angry was Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger," (Prov. 15:1 [NIV]). This one and several others relate to the skills the school is trying to teach, such as emotional regulation. The teacher mentioned to me that these bibles really helped her draw out lessons in their teaching a lot of which see believed. As Mrs. King explained, the religion curricula are important for conflict resolution and social behaviour lessons in the school.

Figure 3: Adventure Bible

Here it is seen how the school employs Christianity to teach concepts like emotional regulation and other conflict resolution skills. As Sande (2004) explains, conflict can be dealt with in a God-honouring way which includes trusting, obeying, and imitating Christ

as in Proverbs 3:5-7, speaking the truth in love (Eph 2:15), and remembering the teachings of forgiveness (Col. 3:13), (Gliebe 2012). These messages underpin some of the ways Christianity guides people in their personal conflicts. They also play a role in creating the enthnomethods for conflict resolution in the school community, as is seen when teachers chose to center their lessons around the "Bible verses to read when I feel" section of this Bible.

Christianity is half the foundation that creates conflict resolution values at the school. It is foundational theory that creates the ethos of the institutional conflict resolution at the school which is found at the base of Figure 2. The second half of the foundation is brought into the school from the program used in the health curriculum.

Trinity uses a program called *Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success* in their health curriculum. The program emphasises the importance of social emotional learning (SEL) and skills. SEL is "teaching children to recognize and cope with powerful emotions in themselves and others, develop empathy, arrive at good decisions, and establish positive relationships" (Jalongo 2014, 6).

In the Second Step curriculum, there is a separate program book for each grade level from primary to grade seven, with each year building upon the last. They each have three units that consist of several lessons. For example, unit one from the grade four workbook is titled "Empathy and Skills for Learning," and its description is as follows, "Empathy is a key ingredient in the development of prosocial behaviours and interpersonal problem-solving skills important for social-emotional competence" (Second Step 2019). The lessons in this unit include *Listening with Attention, Understanding*

Complex Feelings and Showing Compassion. In each lesson the acronym STEP is emphasised as a means of decision making. STEP stands for: *S*ay the problem; *T*hink of solutions; *E*xplore consequences; *P*ick the best solution. Finally, every lesson includes sections that help students understand the lessons in the context of their everyday lives.

The teachers who use Second Step in their classes spoke highly of the program. Mrs. King found that the lessons were well planned and age appropriate. The program is formatted in such a way that it facilitates easy learning and teaching through worksheets and videos. Mrs. King said, "I can see kids buying into these videos. They have partners and they role play how to actually [apply the lesson]." In previous years, she saw the most success with the lessons on assertiveness, which taught about body language in a conflictive situation. She witnessed students using the tools they were taught in order to stand up for themselves and their peers in a wide array of situations.

The partnerships Mrs. King spoke about are similar to the conversation spaces from the previous section. It is teaching children to be able to develop trusting relationships in which they can have tough conversations. On the play ground one day, two students couldn't agree on who's turn it was to play the bad guy in their game and were getting mad at each other. The teacher who got involved had both students sit together on the playground and they talked through both sides of the story and what an appropriate solution might be. The students decided to do Rock Paper Scissor to decide who would be the bad guy and start taking turns again after that. As the adults at the school teach the importance of, and actively create, conversational spaces with trusted peer relationships,

they are giving this method priority and value within their own conflict resolution practices.

Over time, Trinity has created its moral and ethical foundation through their combination of Second Step and Christianity. This specific combination reveals the values of the community regarding conflict resolution and makes skills tangible for staff who teach them to students. Mrs. King spoke to the connectedness of their religion class and the Second Step program: "The whole basis of what we're founded on, which is the love of Jesus Christ and God, is this [Second Step] program in a spiritual form. So, everything that we read, every teaching that we do in our religion class is all about how we treat each other and how we're kind to others. So, I would say that the two work together."

The two programs, Second Step and Christianity, have many similarities in their values and lessons. One significant value they share is individualism. In a cultural context, individualism is a moral principal that underpins societal norms of action and interaction. More specifically,

> In individualist cultures, it is only persons or elements considered as individuals that can be evaluated successfully, and they are so evaluated from the point of view of how their actions bear on their own self-determined projects rather than on the state of a larger whole (Robbins 2004, 291).

In other words the an individualist worldview influences the ways people interact with each other and what is considered right and wrong behaviour. A discussion on the creation of appropriate behaviour takes place in more depth in the next chapter.

Within Christianity, individualism is exemplified in the concept of sinning. Consequences of a person's actions fall on an individual rather than the whole group, such as a family or community unit. Further it is on the individual to ask for forgiveness for their sin, which they do in private during confession (Robbins 2014). On the other hand, Second Step also emphasises individualism in their programming. Each of their units focuses on an individual's actions, and individual's emotional responses. Further apologizing for one's wrong doings is also expected of that person in a similar semi-private fashion. This is why Christianity and Second Step work well together to form a firm foundation for the moral education of the Trinity students.

The Bible ceremony rehearsal is a perfect example of the combination of both programs. As explained, the acronym STEP asks students to stop and think about their actions. Mrs. King during the rehearsal also asks the students to stop their current behaviour and consider the school goals. She wants them to take responsibility for their past and future behaviour and use a prescribed value to "pick the best solution." Responsibility for one's own actions is highly stressed; it is an important part of creating conversational spaces and a key lesson in SEL which the school bases it's conflict resolution practices in.

The values that the two programs have in common, such as Empathy, are important in the ethnomethods of conflict resolution at the school. Second Step emphasises emotional-stability and the ability to separate one's emotions from a conflictive situation. Similarly, the Christian teachings at the school ask students to recognize their own emotions as in the example from the Adventure Bible. To this end, one can understand

why the Second Step program was chosen and works well within the rest of the school curriculum. The methods it encourages students to use, blends well with the values of Christianity.

Institutional Conflict Resolution – Teacher Valued

The second part of institutional conflict resolution at Trinity is found in the relationships of students and teachers and the ways values are passed within that relationship. This includes the ways they conflict with students and the ways they set up their classroom space. However, it does not include conflict that occurs between two students in which a teacher intervenes. It is from the teachers, that students see ethnomethods of conflict resolution modelled.

The Bible ceremony example demonstrates a teacher using her position to give legitimacy to the School Goals and validating the foundational values of the school. Frequently at Trinity, teachers refer to an aspect of the institutional code of conduct, such as the goals, when cautioning students against particular behaviours. Very few of the interactions I saw involved a teacher directly telling a student what to do. Rather they tell the child the expectations along with an explanation as to why that is the expectation. The teachers have high expectations for their students, and more often than not the students meet those expectations. When they don't, the teachers make these kinds of explanations as to why it's important they act in a particular way.

In addition to the Bible ceremony, there are two more events that exemplify the different ways teacher's values are added on top of the foundational conflict resolution. In each of these examples the teacher is either stating or demonstrating expected and appropriate behaviour to the students. The first is from a grade five math class and the second an indoor recess in the grade four classroom:

In early January, Mr. Jackson's class got marked math tests back. Most students had written the test in class the previous week, however there were a few absent that day and wrote the test during lunch time the following day. The original test had a bonus question on it, which after most students wrote it Mr. Jackson decided the question was too hard for the students. He decided that it would be best to remove the bonus question from the test for the students writing at lunch time, because they had less time to write the test and he did not want to stress them out with a hard question they would not have time to answer. Upon receiving their tests, the students noticed the difference and one student, Brad, got quite angry. "But Mr. Jack, it's not fair," he said, "I could have done it in less time. They got a chance at two points that I didn't!" Mr. Jackson explained that only one student got the answer right, and then went on to say the following. "It's important that you understand what these grades mean. 100% is perfect. 90% means you probably only made about one mistake, so that's also a great job. 80% or so means you did pretty well, there's probably just one thing or two that you could review. 75% means we probably need to spend some more time practicing. We don't need to worry about anything under that because everyone did very well." The student was still upset, muttering about fairness. Mr. Jackson went to Brad's desk and said to him, "Why don't you go for a walk

and take some deep breaths. If you're still upset when you come back, we can talk about it some more during recess." Mr. Jackson and Brad did not have a further conversation. After class Mr. Jackson told me that it was out of character for Brad to react in such a way especially because he received an 80% on his test in the first place.

The second example is from a breaktime in the grade four classroom:

On the last Wednesday of school before Christmas break, grade four students exchanged K.K. or Kris Kringle (Secret Santa) gifts by sneakily leaving them in each other's cubbies in the hallways so they wouldn't give away their identity. One girl, Lacy, received a mini Lego set and during the rainy recess inside, was putting it together with some of her friends. They were discussing how to read the directions and where to put each piece. Mrs. King noticed them and said, "Thank you, Lacy for sharing your K.K. gift. That's very nice of you." Lacy smiled in acknowledgement of Mrs. King and went back to building.

In the example from the grade five math class, Mr. Jackson and Brad were in a conflict about the fairness of Mr. Jackson's judgement on the need for the bonus question. We see Mr. Jackson demonstrate what he believes to be proper conflict resolution. He keeps his voice calm, speaks directly to Brad while making eye contact to explain the situation, and encourages Brad to take a walk so that he is able to engage in the conversation in a similar fashion. All of the students in the class observed this exchange. They saw Brad get mad and they saw their teacher exhibit some of the methods the *Second Step* teaches them about remaining calm. As a role model for behaviour, Mr.

Jackson's actions are reinforcing foundational conflict resolution that the curriculum promotes on behalf of the community.

In the last example, Mrs. King uses positive reinforcement of a behaviour she wants to encourage in her students. During her interview Mrs. King explained, "We expect [the students] to be kind to each other. We give positive reinforcement if somebody does something that is the right thing." Things like sharing, using respectful language, and taking initiative to clean or fix something were all actions given positive reinforcement during the two months I observed the classes. The chosen behaviours are ones valued by the teacher who is giving the praise, and is not completely the same across all teachers, however it is similar in that all teach within the same foundational belief system.

Mrs. King also explained how every teacher knows what is going on with all the students in the school, so they are able to continue to give praise to students who need and deserve it. Once a week the teachers have a staff meeting during which they discuss which students had success that week and which ones staff members should keep an eye on in case they need support in a particular social or academic situation.

Trinity takes positive reinforcement of their values outside of classroom lessons as well. Once a month the elementary school has a ceremony which they call Prims. Prims is a tradition of over 150 years that celebrates student social and academic excellence. During the ceremony Mr. Parsons and Sister Crane sit at the front of theater and give out multiple levels of awards. First is the "Very Good" award. Each award recognized a class for work they did, like the grade 3's ecology projects, as well as a few individual students for their accomplishments that month. Each of these students are given a certificate. One

student in the grade four class was recognized for her creativity in answering her writing prompt, "Where would I hide if I were an Elf on the Shelf?"

Following the Very Good awards were the Medal awards. These awards were given to three students in each grade level for mostly the same things such as good work on their Learn to Type program or doing a little extra to help a teacher. The medals were silver and about the size of a quarter. They hung on long chains and students wore them around their necks with pride. One side had an engraving of Jesus and the other side Mary.

Next were the presentations of Special Medals. Each of these was awarded to one student from the school and each was for something specific. Some examples included

Figure 4: Medal Awards from Prims Ceremony

Courage et Confiance[iii], Peace Making, Science, and Sportsmanship. Finally, the class cup was given out to the class who accomplished the most or did a good deed that month.

The Prims ceremony rewards students for good behaviours that are considered appropriate by the teachers and staff at the school, students are rewarded for following the

rules and meeting the social behaviour expectations of their teachers. The question must be asked though, why and by who were these rules created.

What is and isn't considered good behaviour is a standard that is created by the institutional actors of the conflict resolution diagram, and they "seek to ensure student safety and compliance in a broader culture of fears of violence" (Raby 2012, 3). The school rules are intended to help everyone in the community to get along. Some rules are based in the morality of the community, such as rules against guns, while others are based in convention, not wearing hats for example. This works well when we once again consider the school as a part of a wider society; the adults make the rules to teach the children. However, when we consider school as a mirco-society in of itself, the power dynamics of the rule-makers, rule-followers, and rule-breakers no longer represent the ways democratic societal rules actually work.

In schools, there is a clear hierarchical system of power set up between students and teachers. At Trinity, Sister Crane, the headmistress, is at the top of the hierarchy and she is followed by the principal and other administration, the teachers and finally the students. The school rules are made by those with the most power and those with the least are expected to follow them. The rules therefore reflect the value system of the teachers and administration who create and enforce them. We see at Trinity, the importance of Christianity within the rules. For example, the sacred space created in Mrs. King's room, as detailed in Chapter Two, must remain uncluttered at all times. One day, a student put a bag of building blocks on the table during free time before class. When Mrs. King came

into the room, she immediately asked who left them there, and had the student remove them. She reiterated the rule of not cluttering that table because it is an important space.

This system of rule making is established on the assumption that children are innocent and incapable of coping in an 'adult' world, (Lancy 2008; Souto-Manning 2013; Raby 2012) many rules are established to either protect them from that world or teach them how to behave in it. However, rules don't always accomplish the latter goal.

Idealistically, democracy is a system and process that engages all citizens equally in the process of creating the laws and legislation by which they live communally. Presumably schools that exist in democratic societies would seek to instill students with democratic values and practices. Part of being able to function in the 'adult' world should encompass skills in democratic participation. A basic way in which to do so is to have student participate in the production of school rules. They ways rules are created, in a top-down fashion, is unfavourable to creating democratic citizenship (Raby 2012).

Some scholars argue that modern day schools are not interested in creating democratic citizens, rather to maintain the status quo in gender, race, sex, and age relations (hooks 194). Further, the unequal power dynamic between students and teachers is further reinforced through inconsistent rule application within the micro-society. Those in power don't always have to follow the same rules as the students, and inconsistency arises between what teachers say and what they do. The following two examples demonstrate this point.

During a morning assembly, Sister Crane, the head mistress, walked in, wearing her professional work clothes and winter boots. "Good morning boys and girls," she said. All the students stood and replied with good morning. "Has anyone ever forgot something important before?" Sister Crane asked. "Like maybe leaving your homework at home instead of bringing it to school." Many of the students nodded. "Everyone forgets things sometimes; no one is perfect and that's okay. Today, I forgot to bring my dress shoes, so I am wearing my winter boots. Please excuse my boots today, and tomorrow I will not forget my shoes." Teachers and students a like smiled kindly and the assembly went forward as normal.

A couple weeks later, students were asked to take out their agendas to write down their homework. Toby put this hand up immediately. When called upon he said, "I forgot my agenda today." The teacher, with a frown on her face got a piece of paper for Toby to write on and said, "It is your responsibility to bring your agenda every day. You will have to write on this for today, but if this happens again, we may need to talk to your parents about making sure you have it packed in your bookbag." After the discussion the teacher went back to the front of the room, and class went on as normal.

Is there a big difference between the headmistress forgetting her shoes, and a student forgetting his agenda? It is possible it wasn't the first time to the student forgot his agenda, but it is also possible it wasn't the first time the headmistress forgot her shoes. The difference in the response of authority figures, however differed greatly. The student, who is 'incapable in the adult world' was scolded for his forgetfulness, while the adult went on without consequence.

Paulo Freire (1993) and bell hooks (1994) describe an ideal classroom where students are not pacified into conforming to the norms of their community but encouraged to follow their own path to knowledge growth and exploration. In this scenario the teacher is a facilitator, an equal, to their students sharing with the students the responsibility of teaching and learning in the classroom. It gives the students the tools to create social transformation. According to hooks, education should be the practice of freedom, not submission. However, under the current school rules and practices this is not possible.

In many North American classrooms, a common sight on the first day of school is in the teacher in the front of the room on the first day of school with a large piece of paper and marker. They will ask something like, "What rules should we have in this classroom so that we can all get along and learn together?" This technique tries to give students autonomy in creating the rules, however students usually regurgitate the same rules they have heard year after year. Instead of creating their own society, they have only been given the feeling of autonomy in the same school system.

Mr. Jackson's grade five class went through a similar exercise in early September. Their activity was slightly different in that they came up with a list of values they have as a class and then creates rules for each one. The first entry is "We value being ourselves, so we be silly when we can," and the second "We value forgiveness, so we forgive other when they mistakes." The document they produced was titled Class Constitution and every student signed it.

The inclusion of values helps the students connect to the rules and understand the need for them. The students did have space for more autonomy and creativity in this activity than those earlier described, however I still do not consider this to be practice of freedom as hooks describes. Instead, this class constitution is more closely connected to Gluckman's (2004) rituals of rebellion. Rituals of rebellion allow for cathartic protest against authority, which eases possible rebellious behaviours set out to change the system.
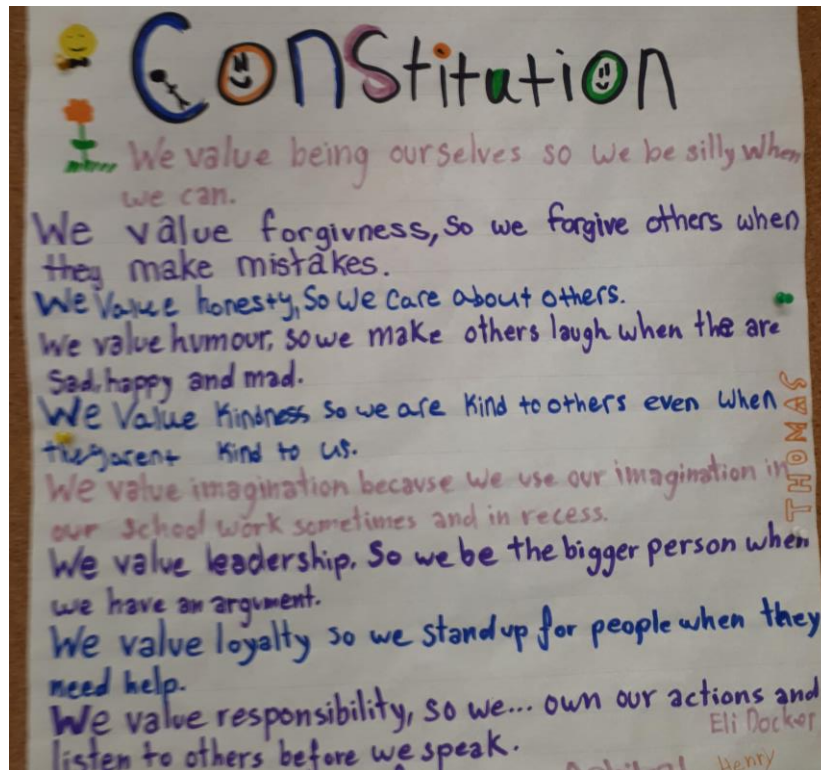

Figure 5: The Grade Five Class Constitution

Those in positions of power want to maintain the system and therefore prevent revolutions. The constitution activity makes students feel more included to the process of rule creation and maintains peace in the classroom but doesn't fully engage them in possible change.

It is hard to know if revolutionary change, as Gluckman (2004) describes, is possible in the school system. If Brad, from the Math class example, had said while creating the constitution, "I do not want to be graded this year, rather I just want to learn everything I can about multiplication," would that had gone on the poster? Would Brad even consider saying such a thing? Unlikely. Revolutionary change in the school system, doesn't seem like a possibility because the students being taught to confirm in a quasi-democratic system are the same ones who would need to create the revolution in their classrooms.

Rituals of rebellion in schools maintain the unequal social status quo of the greater society of the school. Status quo can seem like peace, students are not rebelling against teachers, and they are not arguing or getting in to fights with each other. However, the status quo is a negative form of peace, in which students are pacified into agreeing with the rules they are presented. Mrs. King said frequently that she has a very well behaved class this year, that "there really isn't much going on." Based on my observations this was true. Most of the grade four students very easily got along with each other and their teachers. Was there a positive peace in her classroom? Did every student fully agree with every rule that they were given? It is possible they have fully accepted the socialization their community has given them. It is also possible that they have passively accepted their role as student in the school and go along with the rules with little other option presented. When conflict is constantly repressed in order to avoid it or teach the right lessons one misses the opportunity to make change in the classroom.

"Conflicts can be powerful spaces for engaging in change and for negotiating positive transformation in the social present… Within and through conflicts, we can (re)negotiate social rules as well as our relationship with others, disagreeing with them, offering multiple perspectives, and expressing in many ways our experiences in and with the world." (Souto-Manning 2013, 608-609).

Conflict as space for positive change is only possible when students are given the opportunity and skills to engage in positive conflict. Yet, classrooms are often idealized as ones without conflict, where students and teachers work together peacefully. A classroom without conflict is likely a classroom with negative peace, where satisfaction is only passive among the students (Souto-Manning, 2013). Negative peace maintains status quo in diverse classrooms and refuses students "some control over the socio-political forces that influence their lives" (Giroux 1988, 17).

It was stated that school rules are established to either protect them from that world or teach them how to behave in it. While, I have been critical of the current school rules model Trinity does make strives within it to teach their students the social skills they will need in the future, many of which relate back to the conflict resolution skills the institution aims to teach.

One example of this is the use of circles, or campfires, as the Mr. Jackson's class calls it. At the end of each week the class sits around the "campfire" which is a small structure of four logs, tissue paper and a light bulb, and they have a frank and open discussion about things they liked and didn't like about that week. Mr. Jackson explained his reasoning for having campfires in the following way, "In grade 5 they're starting to enter that period where they're going to have more conflicts simply because, and so I like

to have circle discussions and try to have some mechanisms for them to share and vent in a positive and supportive environment." In teaching students how to talk about their emotions he is teaching them how to value each other's opinions and how to listen to an opinion that one may not agree with. Mr. Jackson is also helping the students learn to talk about their emotions, which is an ethnomethod of conflict resolution that is emphasised by the school.

In addition, the Trinity teachers and administrators spend a lot of effort modelling the conflict resolution they expect of their students. The example of Sister Crane and her forgotten boots is one example of this. She recognized her mistake and apologized, which they want their students to be able to do as well.

Finally, I argue that the private school setting allows Trinity teachers to have the freedom of a flexible curriculum and adaptability to meet student interests. Mr. Jackson was able to switch around the day's lesson plan to allow students to spend more time on a Learn-To-Code website instead of the Math lesson he had intended.

Conflict resolution as it is presented by the teachers adds a layer of expectations and in-the-moment context to the Christian and Second Step values at the foundation. In many situations, the power dynamics of the school do not allow students to conflict peacefully with their peers, teachers, or curriculum, but Trinity teachers take steps to ensure they learn some of the social skills they may need to be able to do it in the future. From the Teacher Valued conflict resolution students are able to observe and possibly imitate the ethnomethods used by the community in which they are growing up.

Operational Conflict Resolution

Operational conflict resolution is the methods that students use in their day to day lives to resolve the conflicts they get into with each other. These tend to be more reactive than the institutional forms and don't have standardized rules, like those of *STEP,* which guide students through their problems. Sometimes this conflict and its resolution is more abrupt and impulsive than the conflict resolution that involves the school and its teachers. One example is when a student dropped a scrap of paper on the floor between two desks. Two students, Josh and Amanda argued over who should pick it up.

Josh: "You need to pick that up."
Amanda: "No, you dropped it!"
Josh: "No it's yours!"
Amanda turned her back on Josh without picking up the paper.
Josh sighs angrily but bends down to pick it. "I watched you drop it." He takes it to the recycling bins.

Frequently students, especially in the younger age groups, would have little arguments like this: who has to clean up; who gets to go first in the game; or who gets to sit next to who. The most frequent place for arguments was out at the Ga Ga Ball Pit. Ga Ga Ball is a game played inside a small contained area and kids hit a ball around trying to hit someone with it to get them out of the game. The rules stipulate that a person can't touch the ball more than once in a row, and it only counts if the ball hits below the knee. The most common phrase heard at the pit is "You're out!" When they get hit, most often students remove themselves from the game without complaint but sometimes there is disagreement if the hit counted. An argument never lasts long as the rest of the children

want to keep the game moving so they can play again before their break is over. Most often the child who may have been hit will end up staying in the game until they are hit again. Everyone tends to watch more closely when this happens so there is no mistaking a call the next time around.

Many times, the ethnomethod of resolving conflict was to just move on, like with the paper or Ga Ga Ball. Instead of continuing an argument, one student drops their protests and lets the issue go. This is an ethnomethod that students use for conflicts that don't include people getting physically hurt, or in which someone has told a white lie. As students got older and were instilled with more of the values of the foundation, these types of conflict and resolution were not as common.

Not all the student conflict nor its resolution were as simple as these examples. Long running activities brought more complex conflict and therefore the need for students to use more complex conflict resolution techniques. One of these long running activities was the snow fort the students built after the first snow in December. At first it was only a couple of grade four boys building walls that came to their ankle height, however after a few days many of the grade three to fives were playing. They developed a set of rules and roles for people playing, since everyone couldn't fit in the fort at the same time. Some people were builders, others were gatherers, and some were protectors. They also had a council of some of the original boys that made new rules and gave people jobs.

When there were disagreements, such as whose job it was to find new snow, the boys in the counsel used a democratic vote to find answer. Sometimes the vote included

everyone present at the fort, other times only the counsel voted, because they knew "What is best for the fort."

One recess, Chris, who was the head of the fort counsel, announced a fort meeting, but for counsel members only. Dylan, who wasn't a counsel membered, asked, "Why is it only the counsel?"

"Because we have important information to talk about." Chris replied. Other students made some comments taking Dylan's side and wanting to be part of the meeting. He started to run away, claiming he didn't want to help the fort today. Chris thought about that for a moment, and then said, "Wait Dylan, come back! It's a full fort meeting!" then he turned and announced to everyone else, "It's a full meeting! Everyone come here!"

Everyone, including Dylan, huddled together outside the fort and discussed how to prevent the snow from melting.

Chris here showed empathy for Dylan as he was being excluded, which is one of the skills the institution is trying to teach the students. A similar situation happened the next day, which wasn't so easily resolved. Chris and several other boys had choir practice at lunch time that day. Just before the students left for lunch Dylan asked Chris, "Who's going to be in charge while you guys are at choir?"

"George will be!" The decision was made during recess.

"Why? I've been in the fort longer than George! It should be me!"

"Because we promoted George at recess. He has a higher rank!"

"That's not fair!" Dylan didn't play at the fort at lunch time.

The fort counsel decisions were often a source of conflict between the boys throughout December. Sometimes the children were able to talk about the problems and come to a solution like in the first example; other times there was less of a resolution that made everyone happy, like the second example. The institution is trying to teach the children to include everyone when they play games. Teachers would often overrule the counsel decisions and tell them that certain children have to have the roles they want.

Why is it then, the children don't always use the skills the school is teaching them to resolve conflict? One of the biggest reasons is the influence from institutions outside of the school. Each child is part of several communities such as sports teams, clubs, music lessons. Each community presents these children with a slightly different moral code and beliefs on how to resolve conflict. This is particularly true of Trinity students as they do not attend a school that includes only one geographic "school district," instead these private school students come from several different communities throughout the Halifax region. Therefore, the different ethnomethods one child brings to school may be quite different from another's.

Mr. Jackson said in his interview that he thinks students are also learning skills from their parents and siblings. In his years of teaching he has found that students with siblings, specifically those who are close in age, come to school with more conflict resolution skills because they have more experience with conflict with other children their age. Only children and those with siblings who are much older or much younger don't develop as many skills as early because they aren't having those interactions.

Mr. Jackson also believes they are learning a lot from the internet, specifically YouTube, and video game communities. He said,

> "Unfortunately, a lot of the messaging that they get through those things is that it's good to not resolve conflicts but to be the party with power. That to have power is to be successful, where as resolving conflicts means sharing the power and disrupting [power] equally and coming to a resolution. So, I see a lot of internet game culture and meme culture, having a quite negative effect on this. Like all them playing Fortnite. You're not going to learn anything - that's a petri dish for learning how to not manage your feelings and emotions. So how do I resolve conflicts? Swear at people and walk away. That's not good."

Students come to school with a vast array of influences and a combination of all of these prevail when they interact with each other. The game Fortnite has great influence over what these children do, buy, and say. Frequently a game of chase turned into a shooting game in which they named the specific Fortnite guns they were picking up.

As students spend more time in the school, their ethnomethods for conflict resolution transform, and they begin to favour the skills the institution has been teaching them. The grade five class demonstrated skills that more closely resembled those of *Second Step* and their teachers than the grade three class. For example, near Christmas time, the grade fives were making cookies to practice fractions in Math class. Each team had a different recipe and sat at a different table in the lunchroom, but they all needed to share the ingredients. One group had the bag of flour at their table and a boy from another table came over with his measuring cup to take some. One of the group members said, "Hey! That's ours!" The boy, in response, was very calm and said, "I know you're using it, but Mr. Jackson said we have to share, and I only need a cup." That was the end of the conversation. The boy took his cup of flour without further complaint from the group.

Here we see the student using the assertiveness skills he had been taught through Second Step. Clearly, he did not stop and use the STEP process before telling the other group what he needed, but he did use the techniques it taught about using a calm voice. The longer students are taught within the Trinity system the more socialized they become to the values and behaviours of its foundation.

The final aspect of operational conflict resolution to be addressed is disciplinary actions at the school. As stated previously, the teachers and administration have high expectations of their students, and they are strict about student behaviour. That said, I witnessed very little conflict that was escalated beyond a teacher acting as a mediatory for conflicts between students. The Dean of Students, Mr. Johnson, explained the procedure for discipline in his interview. His example was if two students get in a fight. They first separate the two students, and get each side of the story, they may also ask a teacher who was present for more information. Once the kids involved have emotionally calmed down, they will bring them together to see if the stories are still the same. He explained that someone is always required to apologize, and the other person has to either accept the apology or say thank you, if they are not ready to accept it yet.

Through this process they use a set of questions called, "10 Questions for Restorative Justice," (Figure 6) and using these questions they encourage the children to talk about their feelings and be able to say, "It makes me feel *x* when you did *y*." Using this method follows very closely to the foundational values such as conversation spaces. It encourages productive conversations that promote reflection on one's actions and emotions.
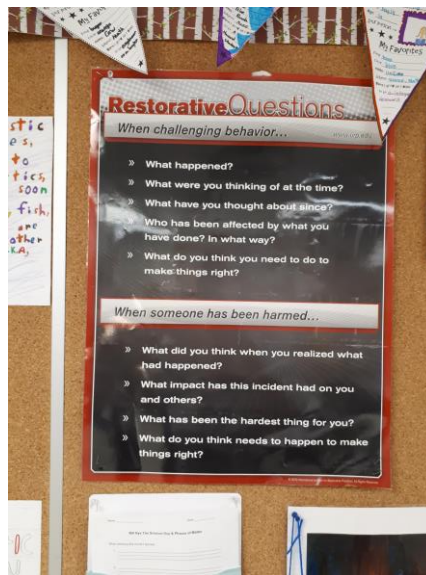
Figure 6: Restorative Questions used to resolve student conflict

As stated, I did not see this process specifically in action, as there was not a conflict that escalated to this degree when I was present. Mrs. King said in her interview, "This year there is very little going in my classroom [in terms of conflict]. In previous years, you could have written pages." This having been said, the community is well prepared for dealing with conflicts between the students. Teachers are often in contact with parents about their child's behaviour at school. One day a girl in the grade four class was disrespectful to a visitor in their class. It was abnormal behaviour for that child, and

Mrs. King wasn't sure what was going on. Mrs. King told the visitor that she would have a conversation with the girl and that she would also inform the girl's parents. A certain set of behaviours are expected of the students, and when these are not met, the whole community is involved in correcting the behaviour: child, parents, and teachers included.

The methods of resolving conflict idealized by the school are fairly different from the ethnomethods used by the students and sometimes the staff. As students get older and spend more time at the school they adopt more of the values of the school into their own methods, but they do not quite match that of the school in grades three to five.

Note of Caution

It is hoped that by dividing conflict resolution into the categories of institutional and operational, it has made it easier to comprehend the complex relationship of conflict, conflict resolution, students, and teachers. Just like any categorization. this breakdown does not have concrete beginnings and ends. Each category influences the other and concepts or examples may fit into multiple categories. One more example from my field work can demonstrate the ways the categories intermingle. A grade four boy named Tyler came running inside after recess and told Mrs. King the following story,

"Me and Josh were playing Pokémon and when I tried my character's new high kick ability, I accidently kicked him in the face. I said I was sorry, but he didn't accept my apology!" Mrs. King asked Josh to come out into the hallway to discuss what had happened. She asked both boys for their side of the story, and then asked Josh if his face was alright. He said it still hurt and that's why he didn't want to accept the apology.

Mrs. King explained to Tyler and Josh that Josh didn't need to accept the apology, but he did have to at least say thank you. Josh did. Following this Mrs. King told the boys, "You shouldn't be so close to someone that you accidentally kick them in the face. That means you were inside their personal bubble and that's not okay." The boys agreed and they all went into the classroom. The follow day Josh accepted Tyler's apology and they played Pokémon again that recess.

In this example, the institutional conflict resolution is dictating to the students what is proper behaviour. Giving people space, or a personal bubble, is valued by the community and is part of the methods it is trying to teach the child. It is discouraging rough play thereby ensuring students don't come in contact with each other unnecessarily. This is the "common sense" that the students are supposed to learn. On the other hand, the operational conflict resolution of the students didn't automatically assume the way to solve this sort of problem in the future was to avoid physical contact. That is something the institution had taught the boys, as is seen when they agree with Mrs. King.

What happened in the scenario draws from both institutional and operational categories of Trinity's conflict resolution. We see the beliefs of personal space and using calm dialog to talk about problems. We also see the students trying to use conflict resolution they have been taught by the institution, such as accepting apologies, but when it didn't work for them they look to other methods of conflict resolution they have relied on in the past, such as telling the teacher.

Anthropologists must move with caution when creating categories to explain social and cultural life. Many anthropologists, most notably Levi-Strauss, have broken down what they observed into social structures with the notion that these kinds of structures

underlie all societies. Do all schools have these two structures of conflict resolution practices? It is unlikely. These categories contain biases from me; who I am, how I've been trained, and my school experience. However, that does not negate their use as a method for understanding the complexity of conflict resolution in a society.

Finally, I must also note that this field data was gathered in a short two months, during which I spent a little more than 30 hours at Trinity. The data as it has been presented is only a snapshot of the time I spent there. Like argued by James Clifford (1986) in his introduction to *Writing Culture,* it is not possible to represent the entire truth of a society and culture within ethnographic writing. This ethnography is a snapshot into the lives of the students and teachers at Trinity, and "'cultures' do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion…" (10). This is true of all ethnographies, including this one. What has been presented in this section is a snapshot of what I observed in the last month of 2018 and the first of 2019 as it pertains to conflict resolution.

Overall conflict resolution at Trinity elementary takes on several forms depending on who is involved and what the conflict is about. Teachers work hard to instill in the students the common sense methods of resolving conflict as it happens in the community. Students also work hard to resolve conflicts with their friends in order to maintain good relationships but do not always do it the way the school has taught them. As students get older they begin to utilize more of the skills the school is teaching them until those skills have been socialized into being the ethnomethods for conflict resolution of the students.

5. Discussion of Significance

The last question that must be answered in this paper is, "Why does it matter?" The knowledge that has been presented has importance in many fields and it can be drawn upon for numerous theoretical and practical purposes.

This study can be used and replicated in any school. For anthropology it adds to the corpus of ethnographies on conflict and conflict resolution. It presents data that could be used for cross-cultural studies, or supplement ethnographic data for comparisons. As the knowledge grows in this area of conflict resolution our theories of cultural conflict will improve. The field of conflict resolution can also use this to help engage with an anthropological perspective when considering conflict resolution with children. This paper also presents important information for educational design experts and educators. Considering cultural differences of students in a classroom can be the difference between a positive and negative experience with the education for students. It can create or completely remove a love for learning for the students.

Incompatibilities between the natal culture of a child and the culture of a school at critical points can be the difference between a student who experiences very little failure in school, and one who experiences only failure. Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp (1987) conducted a study of native Hawaiian students in the public school system in the state. Native Hawaiian students grew up in a culture which values shared work, particularly in taking care of siblings and other family members. At school this presented as "high rates of peer interaction, frequent scanning for other children's errors, and offering and

soliciting peer help" (280). To teachers it looked like cheating and students were often scolded and punished for not working independently. When the classroom was reorganized to allow more teamwork and interdependent projects the students began to exceed their previous success rates.

To drive home the need for culture-dependent education system, Vogt and her co-researchers took the new model of classroom for native Hawaiians into a Navajo community school. However, the intense collaborative nature of the classroom organization did not help the Navajo children succeed in their assignments. "What was culturally compatible and educationally effective for Hawaiian children was not for Navajo youngsters" (Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp 1987, 283). The need for more flexibility in teaching styles and classroom organization can be extremely important for students.

In practice, this knowledge could help teachers understand and relate to their students, helping each and every one succeed without the frustration that often comes with "problem children." Education should empower children, in the context of this paper, it should empower them to make positive change out of conflict. A wider study similar to this one, that includes more schools could tell us where, how, and at what age more conflict education could make conflict a more positive force in children's lives.

There is an endless number of charities, NGOs, and the like that are dedicated to helping children and adults resolve conflicts in many different contexts. The more resources that can be produced to help these groups understand cultural influences on conflict resolution processes the better work they will be able to do.

One of these charities is Peaceful Schools International, and they are the original inspiration for this research. Every year a team of Saint Mary's University students volunteer their time to developing and facilitating conflict resolution and peace education workshops in Halifax, Nova Scotia and in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Their goal in both countries is to promote co-operation and acceptance of diversity among the young students, with the hopes that they will be able to carry the skills they learn with them into their adult lives. It is the hoped that the information presented in this paper will help them add concepts of cultural difference to their workshops.

It is these theoretical and practical applications for my research that make it significant to many communities across disciplines and world wide. I hope similar studies will be replicated in schools around the world so that we can increase our knowledge of the cultural processes that guide conflict resolution and how children learn them.

6. Conclusion

Using ethnographic data from Trinity elementary school, we have, at least partially, answered the questions of how Trinity students are being taught to resolve conflict and how they actually react when faced with a conflictive situation. Based on the three-tier model that describes from where students learn conflict resolution methods, I have discussed the factors that influence the way the school teaches their students conflict resolution.

Foundational conflict resolution provides a primary ethos that guides both students and teachers in valued skills and key beliefs. Through the unique combination of the Second Step program and a grounding in Christianity, students are taught to value emotional regulation and the development of empathy, forgiveness, and love. Teachers reinforce these skills through modelling their own ethnomethods of conflict resolution. They also use positive reinforcement with their students to ensure they support what they consider to be appropriate behaviours.

In operational conflict resolution the ethnomethods, or cultural paths, that the students use to resolve conflicts can be quite different from those taught by the teachers and idealized by the school. However, as students get older, and are socialized in and to the school's community, they begin to use the methods being taught, as was seen with the grade five class.

I have also situated my findings within the fields of anthropology and conflict resolution in order to bring relevance to my work. Anthropologists, conflict resolution

experts, and education specialists can all use the knowledge in this paper to further their understanding of the ways culture influences their students' perspectives on education, conflict, and conflict resolution.

This research has answered all the questions it set out to answer, however along the way, there were several questions I would like to address in the future. One of the biggest is the role of religion in facilitating conflict resolution among the students. Does it have as much influence on the students as it does on the staff? Are the students aware of its influence in their school, as compared to other public schools? I would also like to replicate this fieldwork with students in public schools. The majority of young students in Halifax attend public schools and so it is imperative to create a fuller picture of childhood education in the city to understand how conflict and conflict resolution are taught to those children as well. How will they differ? In what ways are they the same? How does the secular nature of public schools change the outcomes? Further research could also be conducted into the influences on conflict resolution that come from outside of school. What role do their families, coaches, music teachers, the myriad of other people in students' lives play in the development of conflict resolution skills? Finally, I would like to take a deeper dive in to the ideas of bell hooks and Paulo Freire and use my data to conduct a study of positive and negative peace, and the creation of education as freedom.

Anthropology and conflict resolution are two fields that have a lot to offer each other in terms of frameworks to think with and cross-cultural interactions. Using ethnographies of conflict and conflict resolution such as this one, we are able to build

62

knowledge within both disciplines. The more these two fields integrate, the better we will

understand the nature of conflict and conflict resolution practices around the world.

Notes

[i] Pseudonyms are used for the school and the names of all participants.

[ii] An argument can be made that no space is truly safe, as everyone always brings value judgements to every situation. Under this logic the only safe space is one where a person is alone, which is not productive or possible to conflict resolution or life in general. The phrase I prefer to use is conversational space; one in which all participants understand what kind of "safe" behaviours are expected of them, but does not guarantee emotional safety which is impossible to create.

[iii] The first Trinity school was founded in France and French continues to play a traditional role in the school.

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