Practicing Conflict Resolution and Cultural Responsiveness within Interdisciplinary Contexts: A Study of Community Service Practitioners

Christina Parker

Workplace conflict is a significant issue for community service professionals. As more professions work toward developing interdisciplinary teams and culturally responsive practices, the potential for the escalation of conflict may increase as different professional value systems and conflict management strategies converge. However, although they are often expected to respond proficiently to conflicts, many community service professionals may not have had sufficient training in policies, practices, and structures that can provide alternative and transformative approaches to conflict management in diverse contexts. This article presents results of an exploratory study with interdisciplinary community service students who took part in a conflict resolution course at a diverse university in a metropolitan city in southern Ontario, Canada. The findings show that most of these community service–related professionals dealt with conflict on a daily basis, much of which was escalated by cultural conflict, lack of professional resources and development, and limited training in transformative peacebuilding practices. Most participants found that cultural diversity and gender influenced how they responded to conflicts in their various settings. The findings have important implications for how issues of culture and diversity are addressed and included in conflict resolution training programs.

Professionals in the human services are bound to confront conflict, which is inevitably over resources, different professional value systems, and internal and ethical issues. But conflict can also be seen in a positive light—as signifying the need for change. If approached constructively, it

can often produce positive results, resulting in equitable access, inclusion of marginalized perspectives, and healthier relationships. Nevertheless, the normalized avoidance of conflict often trumps any possibility of restoring and rebuilding relationships and communities.

Skillful conflict resolution practices have significant ramifications for community building and promoting dialogue in relationships across interpersonal, community, and systems levels. Ultimately, proactive conflict resolution practices depend on the issue, context, and relationships of those involved in the conflict. In community-based contexts, the choices of service providers and professionals have a direct impact on community members. Thus, healthy and peaceful communities rely on their skilled leaders' ability to work within an interdependent system with various professionals. For instance, students expect that their teachers will model the best ways for addressing conflicts (Bickmore 2005; Jenkins, Ritblatt, and McDonald 2008), and social workers often assume a mediator role so that they can be neutral and equitable in helping people solve their conflicts (Kruk 1997).

Community services comprise disciplines that provide services to the public. They include early childhood educators, social workers, nurses, urban planners, child and youth care workers, psychologists, sociologists, nutritionists, and criminal justice specialists. According to Kruk (1997), such "human service professionals are routinely called upon to deal with conflict" (1). Community service professionals (CSPs) in the human development and service fields (e.g., nurses, social workers, and early childhood educators) play a vital role in helping stakeholders (students, patients, clients, and community members) resolve conflict and develop their sense of self and acceptance of the cultural differences around them. This goal cannot be achieved without recognizing and addressing differences (Kahane 2003; Kumashiro 2004; Parker and Bickmore 2012). How CSPs work together in interdisciplinary teams is equally vital for managing complex social issues.

Cultural and social conflicts are pervasive in our cosmopolitan society. The roots of these conflicts can be found in competing interests and patterns of access that are intangibly connected to culturally shaped beliefs, fears, and values (Ross 1993, 2007). Responses to cultural conflict can reinforce (or mitigate) ethnic and social conflict (Bekerman 2009; Funk and Said 2004; Ross 1993, 2007). Conflict resolution practices may address social conflicts related to ethnic identities in diverse ways (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Harris 2004; Tawil and Harley 2004).

In their student years in typical professional development education, many CSPs have had little opportunity to gain confidence or skills for handling social, political, and moral subject matter, especially in relation to diversity (Bickmore 2005). For example, many teachers, both novice and seasoned, feel uncomfortable or unprepared in addressing conflict; thus, they often avoid dealing with it and instead refer students to administrators, or else they may step back from addressing it at all (Jenkins et al. 2008; Parker and Bickmore 2012). Professional support that addresses the roots of this problem, such as conflict resolution and peacebuilding education, may help to prepare CSPs for culturally sensitive and dialogic practices that are centered on the client, patient, or student. However, developing confidence for implementing such complex resolution strategies seems to require practice and support to engage in dissent and dialogue among peers (Keefe and Koch 1999; Little 1993).

This article draws on the results of an exploratory study using an online questionnaire designed to explore the types of conflict that interdisciplinary students and practitioners experience, the resolution styles they practice, and their perceptions of the influence of culture and gender on how conflict escalates. The questionnaire also explored the participants' experience in interdisciplinary teams and access to professional development and resources to support peacebuilding practices in their workplaces.

The participants took part in a conflict resolution course I led that was tailored toward CSPs. In the course, they participated in various democratic and inclusive dialogic pedagogies that encouraged interdisciplinary dialogue about conflict and diversity. Pedagogies that encouraged dialogue about social conflicts included classroom discussions, circle processes, cooperative learning, role-play exercises, and interdisciplinary group work. The use of dialogic and discussion-based pedagogies encouraged diverse and alternative viewpoints and offered greater possibilities for students' inclusion. Course work on issues of power and diversity were designed to help deepen participants' awareness of their practice and contributed to their shared knowledge in responding to the postcourse questionnaire.

As researcher, I was specifically interested in asking about what kinds of conflict CSPs in interdisciplinary contexts experienced on a day-to-day basis and the different types of conflict management practices they used in their diverse school and workplace settings. I also wanted to know how practitioners' responses to conflict were shaped by issues of cultural diversity, gender, and social location. Finally, I wanted to examine how working in an interdisciplinary team would influence practitioners' responses to

conflict and diversity. I used the data from the anonymous questionnaire to investigate how selected CSPs who participated in the conflict resolution course might address conflict with diverse stakeholders (students, clients, and patients).

Through this examination of the experiences of interdisciplinary participants, the study contributes to an understanding of how various kinds of dialogue practices and conflict resolution strategies either reinforce marginalization or encourage reciprocal engagement with diverse stakeholders in the community.

Theoretical Framework

Collaborative and transformative conflict resolution practices, such as peacemaking circles, dialogue, meditation, and negotiation, are often overpowered by traditional and normative top-down resolution processes that promote separation of the parties involved in the conflict (peacekeeping) but do little to bring the parties together to discuss the issues and to put practices in place to create sustainable and harmonious relationships (peacebuilding). However, many conflict management processes and other pedagogical tools exist that can guide and shape the diversity and peacebuilding dialogue experiences of diverse students. These tools for handling conflict constructively give participants the opportunity to practice interrupting injustice and contribute to "positive peace" (Galtung 1969). In positive peace, democratic processes, which transform conflict by engaging in "conflict dialogue" across difference, are purposively implemented (Bickmore 2011; Parker 2013).

Many pedagogical tools are available to teachers and facilitators for guiding and inviting students to participate in discussions of conflicting perspectives. For example, dialogic and experientially based pedagogies can address issues embedded in the planned curriculum, as well as issues that are brought up in class through students' personal experiences or current events. Some pedagogies prescribe particular "correct" ways of handling conflict, while others rely on broad principles for including the diverse experiences of the participants to guide the dialogue process.

Prescriptive approaches to conflict education often reflect dominant norms and behaviors in their teaching of an assumed-neutral package of "how-tos" that emerge from dominant cultural contexts; these leave minimal space for diversity of experiences and perspectives of participants (Lederach 1991). By contrast, *elicitive* pedagogies (Lederach 1991) invite

participants to make explicit cultural knowledges that were formerly implicit through storytelling and critical analysis of language, proverbs, and cultural symbols. Such approaches may uncover—and make available to learners—culturally rooted knowledge resources for critical, creative, and locally relevant conflict learning. Thus, in these approaches, conflict education becomes a type of cultural learning: participants identify the different understandings of conflict embedded in curriculum content, thereby cocreating a new body of knowledge. Explicitly inviting students to voice and examine their diverse experiences can help them question and resist prescriptive Western models for understanding conflict and their own so-called commonsense assumptions regarding prevailing social relations. The way could thereby be paved for democratization (Parker 2012).

Lederach (2003) identifies the transformative power of seeing conflict through multiple lenses. For conflicts to be transformative and resolved through peacebuilding approaches, participants need to engage in careful analysis of how these multiple levels coincide and intersect through personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict. Such conflict analysis encourages perspectivism, or multiple ways of viewing a phenomenon (Folger, Poole, and Stutman 2005), and engages with core tenets of intersectionality. In turn, multiple, intersecting, and fluid identities are encouraged that privilege identification with race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, and so on (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2012; Zembylas 2010). Lederach (2005) identifies four capacities or modes for confronting conflicts and building peace: personal, relational, structural, and cultural. These capacities involve recognizing how we learn and respond through creativity and flexibility. Although we know that such capacities are vital when working in interdisciplinary teams and confronting different habits of mind and practice, questions still remain about how to apply these practices in training diverse CSPs.

Shulman (2005b) argues that different disciplines are trained to think, be, feel, act, and do through their particular professional perspective. This kind of professional training is achieved through *signature pedagogies*. For instance, in social work, field experience is a signature pedagogy for learning how to be a social worker (Larrison and Korr 2013; Wayne, Bogo, and Raskin 2010). This same holds true for teacher practicums in schools and medical residencies in training health care professionals. One needs to learn how to take action to respond and perform in one's profession, and action often trumps understanding:

A professional is not someone for whom understanding is sufficient. Understanding is necessary, yes; but not sufficient. A professional has to be prepared to act, to perform, to practice, whether they have enough information or not. You have 32 kids in front of you and you need to act. You cannot say, "You know, give me an hour to figure out what I know that will help me decide what to do next." You have to act on the fly with insufficient information. It's true of a surgeon during an operation; it's true of a member of the clergy counseling the bereaved. Action is equally important, maybe more important, than understanding. (Shulman 2005b, 3)

Learning how to "do" (i.e., enact), a professional role, also involves learning how to respond to conflict in that role. Professional role training also involves learning the appropriate mechanisms to resolution. For instance, teachers learn to give stern looks and at times may choose to raise their voice. Nurses learn to maintain composure even if they are being personally attacked (Skjørshammer 2001). At times, social workers need to hide their emotions—if they need to place a child in an alternate home, for instance. Differing roles require differing responses to conflict. However, conflicts may arise or escalate when responses to conflict are handled beyond or against role boundaries (Hall and Weaver 2001).

Elicitive conflict resolution training relies on engaging multiple perspectives. Interdisciplinary dialogue provides opportunities to reflect on how the different disciplines embody their different professional identities. Dialogue itself is a holistic approach to conflict resolution (Feller and Ryan 2012; Isaacs 1999). It is a necessary component of peacebuilding and facilitating intergroup and ethnopolitical conflicts, particularly in postconflict contexts (Feller and Ryan 2012). When dialogue is purposely implemented to confront difficult issues, it transcends conflicts, making them learning opportunities; this process can be broadly understood as *conflict dialogue.*

Conflict dialogue in classrooms offers opportunities to nurture differences and conflicts in ways that support dialogue across and within difference (Parker 2013). It is constructive discussion of conflictual or controversial issues in educating for and about peace, democracy, equity, and social justice (Bickmore 2011). It serves as an intervention, supporting elicitive and transformative conflict resolution training and developing a culturally responsive practice, essential elements of peacebuilding.

Among the many different types of conflict are intrapersonal (conflict with oneself), interpersonal (conflict with one or more people), intragroup

(conflict within a group), intergroup (conflict between groups), international (conflict between one or more nations), and global (conflicts between one or more nations that affect many people in the world). In workplace settings, interpersonal conflict—moments of disagreement between two people—is typically most salient. Intrapersonal conflict experienced by professionals engaged in working in the community is often overlooked, as the role expectations and professional expertise of such professionals are expected to triumph in moments of adversity (Hall 2005). As such, many CSPs experience ongoing intrapersonal conflict that fuel interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflicts. This tension is complicated when professionals work in interdisciplinary teams.

Diversity, Conflict, and Interdisciplinary Teams

Working in teams is vital to humans' productivity, economy, and emotional well-being (Youngwerth and Twaddle 2011). Working collaboratively across and within disciplines contributes to generating new knowledge, maintaining a safe and healthy democracy, and saving lives (Salas 2013). Expert teams have strong leadership and embrace interdisciplinary perspectives. Most programs in postsecondary learning contexts maintain intragroup knowledge through core courses; electives foster collaboration across disciplines and professions in a more limited way. Successful interdisciplinary teams establish members' role clarity within a collective identity, with common goals and reliance on the consistent exchange of information and ideas (Salas 2013).

How diversity is managed and responded to in the classroom environment may shape how students model and enact particular behaviors outside the classroom. Therefore, classrooms that include students from different professional backgrounds are vibrant spaces for exploring diversity beyond and with other equally important aspects of diversity. For instance, engaging with conflictual issues provides opportunities to make latent ideological differences available for educational discussions. The benefits of conflict in this way are propitious, as participants engage in "the heart of dialogue" (Isaacs 1999). Tienda (2013) argues for the possibility of leveraging "diversity for pedagogic benefit and to promote integration by providing incentive for cross-race dialogue, programs, and peer-led activities that work against evolved human preferences for homogeneity, stability, simplicity, and structure" (474). When students experience such inclusion in the classroom, they may feel better prepared to address issues

related to conflict and diversity in their workplace settings (Parker and Bickmore 2012).

Alimo (2013) found that white college students felt more confident in taking personal steps to address social inequities after their participation in intergroup dialogue sessions. Moving beyond immersion in diverse contexts to interaction and engagement in wider cultural contexts may increase participants' awareness and motivate them to activate their personal and social responsibility in challenging diversity issues (Alimo 2013; Nagda, Kim, and Truelove 2004). For instance, Zúñiga et al. (2012) found that participants' understanding of the connections between race, ethnicity, and gender influenced their active and engaged listening during intergroup encounters.

In their study of undergraduate students pursuing a social welfare major, Nagda et al. (2004) illustrate how integrating intergroup dialogue in the core curriculum provided opportunities for students from multiple social identity groups to share and reflect on their personal social identities and biases, which increased the students' confidence in attending to issues of diversity. Gurin, Nagda, and Sorenson (2011) argue that intergroup dialogue increases the potential for civic engagement through a "psychological and social engagement process that illuminates the connection between the personal and the political, the intellectual and the affective, and the focus on personal relationships as well as on power and privilege" (51).

Intergroup dialogue provides a unique perspective for understanding how contact among interdisciplinary professionals may activate critical reflection on issues of diversity and subsequently influence responses to conflict related to such diversities. Gathering further insights into the actual conflictual experiences of participants may further shape how such dialogue sessions can be facilitated to reflect participants' understandings of conflict and diversity.

Culture and Conflict in Community Service Learning Contexts

McCormack et al. (2002) studied clinical leaders over a seven-month period in a London teaching hospital, observing their experiences and offering training and facilitation of how to develop better leadership strategies in their workplace. Many participants expressed feeling more empowered when they had opportunities to both receive from and give feedback to their colleagues. In addressing instances of collegial disharmony, participants learned that they needed to develop a unified vision for working with older people and working collaboratively in multidisciplinary teams. In

this hospital, developing greater intergenerational understanding through collaborating with collegues and patients across generations was an example of a culturally responsive practice. While McCormack and colleagues did not explicitly address issues of culture or diversity, their attention to finding ways to develop stronger multidisciplinary teams indicated that such collaborative approaches facilitate greater communication among different professionals and perspectives.

In managing intractable identity conflicts, Fiol, Pratt, and O'Connor (2009) encouraged a process of identity shifting to facilitate intergroup harmony. They drew on social identity theory to understand how conflicts over professional group identities—in this case, between administration and medical practitioners—escalated in ways that affected patient-centered care in a midwestern US community hospital. Using an intergroup conflict framework, they drew on Tajfel and Turner (1979) to argue that strengthening group identities also involves careful consideration of affirming subgroup identities in ways that do not drive the groups further apart, particularly when working toward superordinate goals.

Fast (2013) reviews conflict intervention strategies in situations of violence and discusses the types of risk and vulnerability experienced by third-party intervenors in these contexts. She argues for a "self-reflective approach to conflict analysis that examines the interactions between levels and types of causes of violence against intervenors and how an intervenor's programs, mission, and profile interact with the context" (485). While Fast refers primarily to humanitarian workers in high-conflict zones, this application is true for community service–related professionals as well, who need to consistently and proactively engage in different approaches to conflict analysis and resolution—approaches that are responsive and appropriate to the varying contexts and conflict situations encountered.

In a different setting, Katz and Flynn (2013) investigated how conflicts were managed across public, private, and nonprofit organizations in a racially diverse county in South Florida. Based on interviews with executives and surveys with general employees, they found that workplace conflicts were typically interpersonal in nature (e.g., employee-employee, employee-manager, employer-client, and manager-client) and that most of the organizations desired more nonadversarial conflict management strategies and training on an ongoing basis.

Katz and Flynn's (2003) study is an example of how having the awareness of alternative resolution processes such as mediation, dialogue, and negotiations is not satisfactory on its own. Ongoing action to implement,

train, and facilitate these programs is also necessary to integrate constructive conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes into the workplace. The authors found that the small number of organizations that did implement effective conflict management practices also successfully "exhibited a high level of cultural competency, a learning approach to managing conflict, and a flexible conflict management system" (405). They argue that cultural competency training is different from diversity training in that it is inclusive of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and job category. When leaders in organizations focus on "creating a culture of respect and inclusion through training and flexible management," particular attention to issues of power and privilege may be acknowledged and responded to equitably (405).

Teaching and Training for Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion

In this article, I refer to *culturally responsive practice* as a process for deepening awareness of cultural differences. This practice maintains a critical lens that is attuned to and inclusive of other cultures and histories and contributes to reifying the meaning of cultural competency, cultural responsiveness, and antidiscriminatory practices, where I believe the practice of critical self-reflexivity should remain paramount throughout.

The purpose of culturally competent practice is to provide holistic and patient- or client-centered care that empowers vulnerable groups (Douglas et al. 2014). However, culturally competent practice has been criticized for presenting a generic model that perpetuates racism and colonialism, because practitioners may be forced to essentialize and promote absolutist views of nonwhites (Pon 2009). Pon argues for the need to train practitioners in developing a self-reflexive practice that encourages dialogue about racism and colonialism and in which practitioners do not assume that they have complete cultural awareness of the Other. Practitioners may assume that their awareness of discriminatory practices exempts them from promoting colonial or racist practices in the field. Many community service practitioners are engaged in what Britzman (2000) calls the "rush to application" as they participate in intense and structured programs that train them how to think, be, feel, act, and do through signature pedagogies, Britzman offers this cautionary note:

> [W]e would have to think about how the teaching techniques we offer induce compliance in the form of our students quickly taking

techniques to their classrooms [the field]. This rush to application and to what is mistakenly called "the practical," would, of course, be compliance to the dominant rule that knowledge use is strictly defined by its capacity to be externalized and applied to others. (204, quoted in Pon 2009, 68)

Self-Reflexive Practice Challenges the Rush to Application

Research has shown how many workplace conflicts may be exacerbated through cultural contrasts (LeBaron 1997; Mayer 2000). Cultural differences such as ethnicity, generation, gender, class, and race all influence how conflicts are approached and managed. Conflict resolution training prepares students to practice nonviolent resolutions to conflict. Such training also empowers students to speak up on behalf of injustices and address and confront cultural conflicts such as racism and discrimination. In this way, conflict resolution is integrally connected to social justice. Prescriptive conflict resolution teaches appropriate ways to manage conflict based on the morals and values of external factors, such as the curriculum, facilitator, or societal contexts (Lederach 1995). Thus, culturally relevant and responsive conflict resolution training works to elicit the perspectives and perceptions of participants to shape and respond to the curriculum content through intersectionality and critical reflection.

Gay (2010) writes: "Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expression of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning" (31). By experiencing culturally responsive teaching and engaging in critical self-reflection about identity politics and power, students may become more attuned to how their practice and perspective are shaped through their cultural lenses. Gay (2013) refers to this process as helping students to use and identify their "cultural filters" in their own practice (50).

Data on causes of cultural conflict vary, particularly because cultural differences vary and are broad and multifaceted. Children from a young age learn how to respond to conflicts by observing the adults in their lives. Negative experiences people have had with conflict are often reinforced in the media, where it often appears as if the only *effective* way to address conflict is to respond with violence. Most external media sources create and maintain dominant societal pressures to respond to conflicts in ways that promote violence, hatred, and war (Noddings 2012). Often these prescribed and normative responses to conflict may be presented

as patriotic responses, efforts to protect national and cultural identities (Noddings 2012; Ross 2007). In a study of preservice and in-service novice teachers, 59 percent said that their students' ethnicity and culture had some (27 percent) or considerable (32 percent) effect on how they addressed conflicts in their classrooms (Parker and Bickmore 2012). The impact of cultural conflicts in workplace contexts contributes to increased hostility and miscommunication (Fiol et al. 2009).

Some conflict resolution trainers and practitioners may not be prepared to explicitly confront questions about cultural diversity. However, facilitating connections between culture and conflict may encourage CSPs to model culturally responsive practices. The study that follows seeks to show how conflict resolution trainers can better integrate culturally responsive pedagogy through an exploration of how CSPs manage conflicts related to issues of diversity in their day-to-day contexts and how their perceptions of diversity and experience working in interdisciplinary teams influence their practice.

The Interdisciplinary Community Service Professionals Study

Professionals in a wide range of disciplines are likely to encounter situations fraught with conflict. Communities may oppose the development of a new facility, environmental standards may need to be developed, limited resources may need to be allocated to meet emerging societal needs, or different stakeholders may have conflicting demands and expectations. Studying conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and social justice from an interdisciplinary perspective can facilitate a creative tension among different, complex, discipline-specific ways of knowing. Through dialogue, this complexity can be examined and help transform the disciplinary perspectives, individually and collectively. Such a pedagogy, building on diverse knowledge and perspectives, can help participants address and learn from multiple theoretical frameworks and critically reflect on issues of diversity both inside and outside the classroom.

As a researcher in the Interdisciplinary Community Service Professionals Study, I sought to uncover the types of conflict that CSPs experienced and the management strategies they exercised in diverse contexts. I used data produced through Conflict Resolution in Community Services, an interdisciplinary course I led on how to develop consensus-building strategies to produce agreements that everyone can live with. It was offered over thirteen weeks in online or in-class settings or during a five-day intensive

course. In all formats, the course used case materials and examples drawn from different disciplines and diverse contexts. The students worked in structured interdisciplinary teams throughout the course.

Participants entered the course with various experiences with conflict, including internal and intrapersonal conflicts, as well as intragroup and intergroup conflicts in their workplace teams and disciplines. They shared the types of conflicts they had experienced and the influence of culture and gender on their resolution strategies. They were given many opportunities to critically reflect on issues of intersectionality, identity, power, and culture. Culture, power, and gender emerged as major themes in the course.

The students had differing definitions of the term *conflict*. Most of them began with a negative perception, defining it as verbal aggressiveness in interpersonal interactions. By the end of the course, many had begun to view conflict in a more positive light as they saw the learning opportunities available to all parties when transformative peacebuilding processes were used to address conflicts.

The goal of this study was not to gather pretest and posttest perceptions about managing conflict or to engage in an evaluation of the course. Rather, it set out to understand how to better shape conflict resolution curriculum and pedagogy in order to respond to CSPs' concerns. This involved the need to bring forward the types of conflicts and experiences they had in their respective fields. In this way, the course encouraged students to identify the "cultural filters" (Gay 2013) that would have contributed to their increased awareness of the types of conflicts they experienced (particularly those related to cultural contrasts) and allowed them to better articulate their conflictual experiences concerning culture and diversity. Obviously the analysis and findings from students' postcourse questionnaires could not change the types of conflicts CSPs would encounter. However, the course was designed to give them the language to identify these conflicts, providing them with a more nuanced cross-cultural perspective and stimulating their attention to and reflection about how they experienced cultural conflicts.

Methodology

This research examined what kinds of conflict students from interdisciplinary contexts experienced on a day-to-day basis and the types of conflict management practices used in their diverse classroom and workplace settings. Also examined was how practitioners' responses to conflict were

shaped by issues of cultural diversity, gender, and social location. Specific focus was placed on curricular areas that were especially relevant to questions of culture and cultural differences and on commonly used and workable spaces for conflict learning previously identified in the literature, such as interdisciplinary contexts.

Data Sources and Analysis

The nature of the research was exploratory, using an anonymous quantitative and qualitative online questionnaire to better elucidate what kinds of culturally appropriate conflict resolution processes facilitated or potentially impeded resolution in diverse multidisciplinary contexts. The questionnaire had multiple-choice questions, Likert scale questions, and open-ended follow-up questions. Students filled in the questionnaire after they had completed the course. The juxtaposition of quantitative and qualitative data, analyzed in relation to a review of the research literature, enriched my understanding of the research problem (Creswell 2008)—in particular, the kinds of conflict dialogue and resolution processes that both facilitated and impeded resolution in diverse and multidisciplinary contexts.

The questionnaire data focused on the participants' choices in conflict, their sense of preparation and confidence, and their apparent understanding of what it meant to address conflict in their profession in relation to their perceptions of diversity. The study focused on the first level of Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation, the reaction stage, because the postcourse questionnaires allowed participants to articulate how they felt about the training experience. Participants responded to questions about the types of conflicts they experienced and how the cultural identities of their patients, clients, or students influenced their approaches to managing conflict. Participants also shared their experiences of working with multiple professions to solve conflicts on interdisciplinary teams. As a researcher and instructor, I was aware that my perspective could have influenced any evaluative approach to discerning participants' learning, behavioral changes, and resulting performance in participants' workplace contexts. However, I did not intend to evaluate participants' experiences in this exploratory study; rather, I wished to explore their experiences with conflict in their respective fields, while providing them with the language and theories to articulate their perspectives.

Most of the participants were from a culturally diverse major metropolitan city in southern Ontario, Canada, with some participants from rural (and more homogeneous) communities in the province. The questionnaire

was designed in part to elicit information about how cultural diversities influenced participants' responses to conflicts in their workplace and school contexts. Data collected about diversity and culture were analyzed for how they might shed a little indirect light on how these professionals might have been shaped in their conflict education experiences.

I analyzed the quantitative responses using SPSS 15.0 statistical analysis software to generate descriptive statistics, frequencies, cross-tabulations, and chi-square analyses. I then coded qualitative responses thematically to identify patterns and relationships among participants' responses. To interpret findings, I compared and contrasted qualitative and quantitative data with previously published research literature.

A total of 154 individuals (80 percent of those contacted) started the questionnaire; however, 7 percent of the participants did not complete the survey and were not included in the data analysis. The final 141 participants were students in eleven of my conflict resolution classes over the 2012–2014 school years. All were enrolled in an undergraduate or postgraduate program in one of fourteen community service disciplines: nursing (36.2 percent), social work (17.0 percent), early childhood education (11.3 percent), child and youth care (7.8 percent), nutrition (5.0 percent), psychology (4.3 percent), politics (4.3 percent), health management (3.5 percent), urban planning (2.8 percent), sociology (2.8 percent), disability studies (1.5 percent), criminal justice (1.4 percent), midwifery (0.7 percent), public health (0.7 percent), and the arts (0.7 percent). See table 1 for a description of the interdisciplinary service professionals by discipline.

Comparable to most community service–related professions, 89 percent were female and 11 percent were male. Also comparable to such professions in multicultural metropolitan cities, 52 percent identified as visible minorities with respect to their race and ethnicity. Participants described the locations of their related work, placement, or school environment as urban poverty/working class (31 percent), urban middle class/affluent (53 percent), suburban middle class/affluent (13 percent), or rural (3 percent). The majority of students identified their school or workplace setting as ethnically and culturally diverse (82 percent), with a small number of students identifying their contexts as somewhat diverse (14 percent) and even less as ethnically and culturally homogeneous (4 percent).

All participants were either full-time students with placement experience (44 percent) or without placement experience (3 percent); part-time students with program-related work experience, such as a practicing nurse pursuing a nursing degree (26 percent); or part-time students with

Table 1. Representation of Interdisciplinary Community Service Professionals by Discipline

Discipline	Percentage represented
Nursing	36.2
Social work	17
Early childhood education	11.3
Child and youth care	7.8
Nutrition	5
Psychology	4.3
Politics	4.3
Health management	3.5
Urban planning	2.8
Sociology	2.8
Disability studies	1.5
Criminal justice	1.4
Midwifery	0.7
Public health	0.7
The arts	0.7

unrelated work experience but placement experience (27 percent). Participants had various years of paid work experience in their respective fields, ranging from none (48 percent), one to four years (25 percent), five to ten years (15 percent), 11 to 15 years (5 percent), fifteen to twenty years (2 percent), to twenty-one or more years (5 percent). Many of the CSPs had community college degrees and had already worked in their respective fields; thus, the age distribution was ages 18 to 21 (32 percent), 22 to 34 (52 percent), 35 to 44 (8 percent), and 45 to 54 (8 percent), with the majority being the middle adult category.

Slightly more participants had had actual experience working on an interdisciplinary team (52 percent) than those who had not (48 percent). Not surprisingly, more of the younger participants (ages 18 to 24) had had some placement experience but fewer years of actual work experience (zero to four years); this group largely represented those with less experience in formal interdisciplinary team contexts. However, in the conflict resolution class itself, all of the participants experienced working in an interdisciplinary team through a classroom-based project. In the course, the instructor placed the CSPs in interdisciplinary teams of four to seven people, with

each person representing a different discipline. Working collaboratively, CSPs created a conflict scenario that illustrated the escalation and deescalation of a conflict, real or imagined. The main criterion for the role play was that all of the disciplinary perspectives had to be represented in the scenario. While this experience served as a platform to reflect on their experiences with conflict and interdisciplinary teams in their actual workplaces, the questionnaire asked CSPs specifically about their actual experiences with conflict management, and with their culturally sensitive and interdisciplinary work experience.

Results

Developing a Critical Cultural Awareness through Conflictual Experiences. The questionnaire asked the CSPs whether they felt that they dealt with day-to-day conflict in their workplace/school contexts with their respective students, clients, or patients (hereafter referred to as service users, or SUs), giving interpersonal disputes and discipline issues as examples. Only 12 percent indicated that they did not deal with conflict at all in their contexts; 27 percent said that they dealt with conflict in their contexts to a small extent, 35.5 percent to some extent, 17.0 percent to a great extent, and 8.5 percent to a very great extent. While there is obvious individual variability of what felt like a "great extent" to each participant, it is not surprising that well over half (61.0 percent) reported handling a moderate to large amount of interpersonal conflict. To explore this variability further, a chi-square analysis was conducted to evaluate whether there was a relationship between CSPs' greater interdisciplinary experience and day-to-day conflict with SUs. The results indicated that these two variables were significantly related (Pearson χ^2 [3, N = 141] = 17.98, $p < .05$), such that those with more interdisciplinary experience were more likely to experience daily interpersonal conflicts to a great extent (27 percent versus 6 percent) and those without interdisciplinary experience were more likely not to experience this conflict at all (4 percent versus 21 percent).

Almost half of CSPs also felt that they experienced a moderate to large amount of interpersonal day-to-day conflict with their superiors (48 percent). Similarly, a chi-square analysis showed a relationship between interdisciplinary experience and day-to-day conflict with management (Pearson χ^2 [3, N = 140] = 12, $p < .05$); many CSPs with less interdisciplinary team experience felt that they did not experience managerial conflicts at all (28 percent) compared to those with more experience (10 percent).

The cultural identities of the SUs and colleagues that the CSPs worked with also appeared to influence the extent to which the CSPs were aware of cultural conflict on a day-to-day basis. In light of the findings, not surprisingly, CSPs' experiences with cultural conflict also related to how much experience they had had on interdisciplinary teams. In response to dealing with cultural conflict on a day-to-day basis, a chi-square analysis also showed a relationship between CSPs with greater interdisciplinary experience and their involvement with cultural conflicts. These variables were significantly related (Pearson χ^2 [3, N = 141] = 13.7, p < .05), with CSPs experiencing more cultural conflict to some extent (32 percent versus 12 percent). Some of those with interdisciplinary experience felt that they did not experience cultural conflict at all (23 percent), and CSPs without interdisciplinary experience mostly appeared to not identify daily cultural conflict interactions at all (43 percent).

Although most of the communities where the CSPs worked were ethnically and culturally diverse, many pointed out that their staff did not always represent this diversity. One CSP in public health commented that it was expected that clients would be ethnically diverse or visible minorities in comparison to their service providers. A social worker described her work in "priority centers," which she believed represented "primarily immigrants seeking support." While these diverse contexts were influential contextual contributors for conflict escalation, the role of power and privilege was also paramount.

In addition, some new immigrants have different cultural ways of communicating and have not yet had access to the explicit nuances within the "culture of power" (Delpit 1988). This is another way in which cultural contrasts can lead to increased tension during communication. Developing awareness of diverse communication patterns is a skill that many CSPs in diverse metropolitan areas develop through years of practice and immersion in the field. A young (18- to 21-year-old) CSP shared that her perception and experience with other cultures reflected how she chose to serve members of diverse groups: "It depends on the cultural background of the person and how they treat me. If they are very aggressive and not polite [then] I'm not interested in helping them and I also use a very monotone voice. I find myself repeating the same solution with no interest in helping."

Practicing cultural sensitivity and responsiveness through conflict resolution trainings can contribute to encouraging CSPs to reflect on their power and access to resources. Many clients whom CSPs serve have been immersed in a systemic cycle of poverty that perpetuates structural violence

and positions them in opposition to the system that CSPs represent. This system is reinforced through the culture of power and the prescribed training that many CSPs undergo. A young Anglo Indian social work student quickly identified this correlation: "I work at the CAS [Children's Aid Society] so I am always faced with conflict at different levels as people have different cultural upbringings. . . . And being a student in a professional environment has its negatives, as people take advantage of you."

While this CSP's experience developed her understanding of how conflicts may be escalated through cultural contrasts, she also felt that her position as a student in this CAS environment limited her power. Similarly, a young early-childhood-education placement student with a Russian background stated: "Because my role as a placement student is to learn from other professionals, I try to avoid conflict when possible." This avoidance of conflict can lead younger CSPs to internalize their experiences, leaving them little time for critical reflection or support. A young white social work placement student shared that her time for self-reflection was often compromised by the expectations of her role, which was to pacify others: "I sometimes feel that my time to self-reflect and get composed gets jeopardized to soothe others' wants." This emotional tension is paramount in busy, fast-paced health care contexts, as a Zulu African nurse with three years of experience reflected: "The environment is very fast-paced and there are a lot of decisions that need to be made, and in many instances consensus must be reached before any action can be taken. Both issues can make working in health care/nursing very stressful." A common phrase, "nurses eat their young," refers to the systemic power imbalances in centralized CSP training. A mature nurse manager reflected that she had had a negative experience as a student and novice nurse and used this to become conscientious of her leadership style, knowing that her actions could have a direct impact on how new nurses engaged in collaborative nursing practices. Still, the perpetuation of power differentials continues to influence CSPs at various levels in their training and career. Ultimately, in high-tension, fast-paced work environments, advocacy for modeling and promoting a positive, collaborative, interprofessional practice is key to retention and recruitment (Tomajan 2012).

Barriers and Opportunities to Conflict Dialogue in Interdisciplinary Contexts. Most conflicts that CSPs reported encountering were results of institutional barriers, including access to power and to resources. Conflict over resources was an ongoing concern for many CSPs, who were

confronted with the daily experiences of resource shortages. For instance, a nurse manager reflected that her daily source of ongoing tension was finding beds for patients, which she points out "is a continuous issue that affects patients and relationships between staff."

The CSPs' experiences in interdisciplinary contexts further illustrate the saliency of how cultural conflict is exacerbated through the notion of difference at both the professional and cultural levels. A full-time child and youth care (CYC) worker of six years articulated the tension between role boundaries in the schooling context:

> Sometimes CYCs feel social workers do not take our opinion into account enough, considering we spend almost twenty-four hours a day with the children while they only see them a few hours a week if at all. A lot of living arrangements decided for our kids are not what we feel is best for the child, regardless of the fact that we feel we know the child and family better because we have worked with them more one-on-one.

Clearly, the lack of interprofessional dialogue contributes to such heightened tension. A white male CYC worker with ten years of experience felt that he dealt with conflict to a great extent with both SUs and management and felt the need to develop "a lot of tact and patience." He described how multidisciplinary teams that employed minimal disciplinary collaboration contributed to this conflict escalation:

> Competing disciplinary values and approaches can lead to conflict between myself and other social service professionals. For instance, I have had supervisors who hire consulting psychologists for us to discuss issues faced by the youth I work with, and my supervisors expect me to follow the psychologist's opinion verbatim. However, when working directly with the youth I may see things that oppose the advice of the psychologist, placing me in conflict with how I am expected to intervene and what I see as relevant practices to working with youth. In other instances I may encounter youth and families who are jaded by past experiences with other social service professionals and must work through difficulties engaging them and gaining their trust while demonstrating how I can be helpful and beneficial to them.

As a more seasoned practitioner, this same CSP developed a critical awareness of his power and privilege when working with marginalized clientele:

> I think whenever I am relating to someone of a different cultural background I try to understand myself in relation to the other person. I am a white male, placing me in the dominant majority, so knowing my societal status and privileges is important for me to consider. I try to be cognizant of any real or even perceived power imbalances so that I can ensure that how I deal with people reflects a sense of fairness and equality.

Clearly, while competing disciplinary perspectives influence conflict escalation, so too do cultural differences among both SUs and CSPs. While being trained through nursing signature pedagogies, a Filipino nursing student prepared herself for interdisciplinary conflict in the health care context: "Since I am going into a very interdisciplinary career and coming into contact with individuals from very diverse backgrounds, I feel like conflict is going to happen regardless. It almost always does." At the same time, this nursing student also reflected: "Being raised in an Asian culture, I have been taught to be more passive when it comes to conflict and try to avoid it when possible." In contrast to the male CYC's perspective above, this nursing student was less confident in confronting conflict and perhaps more unwilling to challenge hierarchal systems through her personal power. Such perceptions among more novice or less confident CSPs could be challenged through the kind of elicitive and critical conflict resolution training that can work to strengthen the confidence of CSPs to be better equipped for such expected (cultural) and interdisciplinary conflicts (Lederach 1995, 2003).

An older (45 to 54 years of age) emergency room nurse, originally from Jamaica, shared her experiences of working in an interdisciplinary team: "Working as a part of an interdisciplinary team in an ER, there are frequent conflicts between the various disciplines in terms of each one's 'perspective' and 'agenda' in the process of the delivery of care to patients." She went on to share that in her workplace, she had had to earn the respect of her colleagues and yet continued to experience cultural conflicts on a daily basis, based on her personal identity: "I am aware of my differences, being the only woman of color working in a suburban white neighborhood. I am usually sensitive that I may be subject to their stereotypes and find myself at times overcompensating to demonstrate my competency."

Clearly, working with multiple disciplines increases perceptions and awareness of how ethnocultural differences influence workplace conflict. Still, many students who experience learning in interdisciplinary teams experience accelerated learning and develop "critical thinking and

problem-solving skills for addressing complex issues and creating lasting impact" (Nandan and London 2013, 817). As Shulman (2005a) and others (Bronstein 2003; Jessup 2007; Nandan and London 2013) point out, interdisciplinary teamwork contributes to the generation of new knowledge and ideologies while also enhancing creativity. In addition, experience on interdisciplinary teams appears to be a clear indicator of how CSPs address and approach issues of diversity. With a deepened sense of awareness about how cultural contrasts influence their practice, we may consider how team members' identities, values, and professions can be used as learning resources.

Cultural Identities and Cultural Learning in Interdisciplinary Teams.

When asked directly, "Do you think the ethnic and cultural identities of your students/clients/patients affect the ways in which you address/deal with conflict in your workplace/classroom?" fewer respondents (27 percent) said no. The majority said that SUs' ethnicity and culture had some or considerable effect (73 percent). When asked specifically whether the ethnic and cultural identities of SUs affected how CSPs addressed conflict, a chi-square analysis showed that a relationship was based on whether the CSP was a visible minority. The results indicated that these results were significantly related (Pearson χ^2 [3, $N = 141$] = 11.6, $p < .05$), such that CSPs who were visible minorities felt that the cultural identity of the SU influenced their response to some extent (31.5 percent) more than those who were not visible minorities (13 percent). Similarly, while those who were not part of a visible minority group felt that the SUs' cultural identity did not influence their conflict response (44 percent), those who were visible minorities felt less certain that the SUs' ethnocultural identity influenced their conflict response at all (22 percent).

In response to a similar question about whether gender and sexual identities of their SUs' affected their handling of conflict, a similar proportion (20 percent) said they did not. The majority indicated that gender had some or considerable effect (80 percent) on the ways in which they treated conflict in their workplace or classroom. Among the fifteen different disciplines represented in this sample, social work, nursing, and early childhood education (ECE) made up the largest groups. These groups were measured separately against all other disciplines grouped together as a fourth program area to conduct a chi-square analysis on whether discipline influenced any of their responses. The results indicated that discipline and responses to conflict based on gender of the SUs were significantly related (Pearson χ^2

[3, $N = 141$] = 15.9, $p < .05$); social workers felt strongly that gender was a factor in addressing conflicts with SUs (54 percent); nurses also felt more strongly about this (35 percent). In comparison, early childhood educators felt that gender did not have much of an effect on their conflict responses (19 percent). The fourth group (all remaining disciplines) also felt that gender was less of an influential factor in their responses to conflict (18 percent; see figure 1).

Qualitative responses indicated vast differences between how CSPs perceived gender and its implications. Again, some felt that all SUs were the same, while others identified the saliency and impact of these differences. A white male nursing student felt that his sex provided him with authority in conflict situations to resolve conflict through action:

> I find that male staff are more doers, addressing tasks . . . whereas female staff are more approachable. As a male student I found myself more often than not doing things to take care of a situation instead of sitting down and talking to the person or patient to solve any issue or tension.

This male student's response affirms this presupposition: that males are doers and thus perhaps better equipped to resolve conflicts. Addressing such institutionalized and internalized stereotypes is necessary in conflict resolution training. By encouraging the identification of such oppression, the possibilities for transformative practice prevail (LeBaron 1997).

Figure 1. Effect of Gender on Conflict Responses
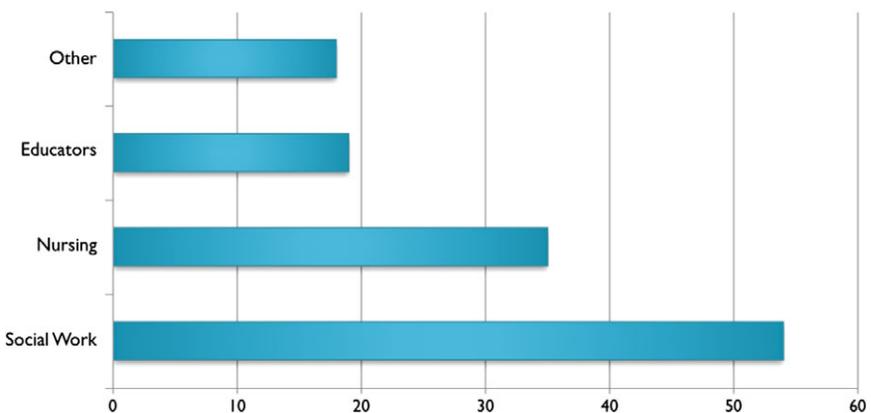
*Note:* The effect of gender is exacerbated for social workers and nurses.

Skjørshammer (2001) found in her study with predominantly female nurses that avoidance was a primary response to conflicts. A young Chinese nursing student affirmed this perspective, stating that from her experience in hospital settings—"Males are usually seen as strong so they won't be pushed around very often. Females and other visible minorities are seen as weak and will be pushed around"—and in line with Skjørshammer's and the male nurse's perspective. She went on to say: "Females either like to talk about the issue or avoid it."

Still, some CSPs felt that they "treat everyone the same" when in conflict, regardless of their own sexual identity or gender. Others identified dominant stereotypes of how to communicate with men and women. For instance, a nurse with two years of experience described how she was able to calm down male patients more easily, whereas her female patients tended to be more emotional. In respect to the diverse cultures of SUs, some CSPs did say how they modified their language or speech when serving new immigrants or those whom they identified as from minority groups. Such modifications included using simpler language and slowing down the pace. For others, it meant raising their voice or speaking more directly. Clearly many CSPs appeared to learn to modify their communication patterns through their experiential practice (learning to do) in these various conflictual contexts (Shulman 2005a; Wayne et al., 2010).

CSPs typically experienced to some or a considerable extent internal (85 percent), interpersonal (89 percent), intragroup (66 percent), and intergroup (67 percent) conflicts to some or a considerable extent. Across programs, the only other significant relationship that existed between programs and CSPs' experiences was with intragroup conflict (Pearson χ^2 [3, N = 140] = 24.8, $p < .05$). Again, social workers, nurses, and early childhood educators, measured separately among the remaining professions, indicated that they experienced intragroup conflict to some extent more than others (social workers, 37 percent; nurses, 58 percent; educators, 47 percent; the remaining group, 19 percent).

When asked to what extent they used particular conflict communication strategies—such as mediation, dialogue, staff meeting, circle process, written report, or avoidance—most participants (89 percent) identified one-on-one discussions or dialogue as a dominant technique for addressing conflicts, followed by staff meeting (65 percent), avoidance (63 percent), mediation (45 percent), written report feedback (28 percent), and circle (4 percent; see figure 2).

Figure 2. Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building Methods that CSPs Used
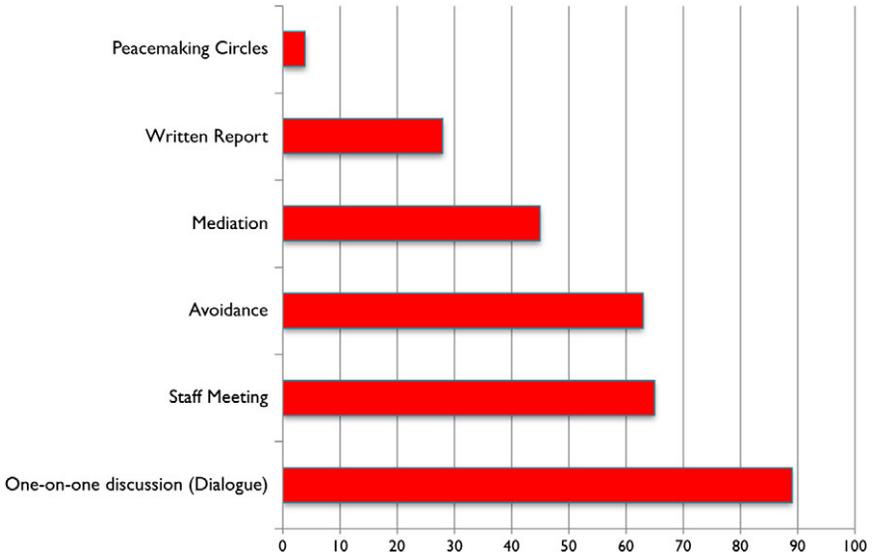
When asked if CSPs' own personal identity influenced how they responded to conflict, 26 percent felt that their identity had little or no effect, while the majority felt that it had considerable to great influence (74 percent). While some participants found that such differences did not influence their practice, others found that such differences accounted for a large percentage of their conflict experiences. A student nurse reflected on how her identity influenced how both her colleagues and patients responded to her: "Being a female Filipino, some ethnicities view women as a subordinate and a servant who is to tend to their every need when working as a nurse. I feel I have to submit to their [patients' and colleagues'] requests regardless of my own feelings." This internalized oppression of capabilities based on ethnicity and gender was reflected in a CSP who identified as a visible minority: "I am a South Asian female student. The amount of power I hold is very little and that is influenced in a conflict. . . . In my community females are told to be submissive and not voice their opinion." In contrast, an Italian female ECE student shared her confidence in addressing conflicts due to her cultural upbringing: "Women are told to show emotion, and talk openly about what is bothering us. Growing up in the Italian culture, we are often told to voice our concerns. If I am comfortable enough with a person I would address conflict head-on."

Others, primarily those with less experience working in interdisciplinary teams, felt that their identity did not influence their responses to conflicts. For instance, a Chinese full-time urban planning student felt that she had not encountered any cultural conflict in her experience or training: "Cultural, ethnic, or gender influences do not affect the way in which I address conflict as I treat everyone equally."

When CSPs encounter conflict related to cultural differences, there is an obvious variation in how they may be trained, when it comes to how they respond and reflect on their power and privilege. A young female ECE placement student who immigrated from Russia, felt that she carried white privilege; she addressed how conflict resolution training influenced her practice: "Training in conflict resolution really prepared me for addressing conflict with cultural students and clients. . . . Being a cultural majority, I feel that I am at an advantage when addressing conflict." Despite her privilege, a white social worker with six years' experience in mental health and addictions and who was also trained in an antioppressive practice still felt insecure when speaking up for marginalized groups: "Due to various stereotypes, I find that I need to address conflict in a subtle way or I will risk being seen as angry or overbearing." While training in cultural sensitivity and conflict resolution may build CSPs' confidence, it still remains a daunting task to work against the systemic and structural oppression embedded in many community and human service professions. For instance, a male CYC worker articulated how conflictual perspectives engaged broader and more inclusive learning experiences:

> In all my core program courses I speak and think in terms that represent a unified language and philosophy. However, in this setting I had to challenge and assess my views in relation to the education, experiences, and disciplinary values of others. When we engaged in activities together, I had to be aware of how I viewed and approached things, but also how to include the views and approaches of others to create new views and approaches that were reflective of our diverse group.

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

Through culturally responsive pedagogy and experiential education, the Conflict Resolution in Community Services course invited students to engage in critical thinking and transformative dialogue about conflict and conflict resolution. The primary types of conflicts they encountered were

internal and interpersonal. Often these conflicts were exacerbated by cultural contrasts relating to race, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, and social status associated with power and privilege.

Overall, this study provided overwhelming evidence that the interdisciplinary nature of the course and the opportunity it provided to critically reflect on their practice facilitated CSPs' greater attention to issues of diversity and better grasp of how to manage conflicts equitably and inclusively. The value of participating and engaging with an interdisciplinary team in a structured classroom environment gave CSPs the opportunity to practice their conflict resolution skills and techniques in a safe setting.

Most CSPs indicated that dominant strategies for addressing workplace conflict included implementing communication, conflict resolution, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The frequency, types, and expectations with regard to training and development varied across disciplines. Participants' responses about how they handled conflicts were reflective of their attention to culturally responsive practices; this awareness was shaped in part by their exposure to pedagogical interventions that stimulated critical reflection about intersectionality and power. Discussions and dialogue based on interdisciplinary perspectives involved nurses, early childhood educators, and social workers; they talked about their different perceptions on interrelated topics, such as serving a child with autism. Nurses questioned why early childhood educators were not allowed to undress a child to examine bruises. Other CSPs asked whether nurses had the authority to prevent parents from entering their child's room. Such interdisciplinary dialogue facilitated conflict learning and developed inclusivity and collaboration among contrasting disciplinary perspectives.

This study serves to encourage interdisciplinary programs to engage students in collaborative and dialogic inquiry beyond just assembling them together in the classroom. Purposive dialogue about social and conflictual issues, for instance, offers ways to facilitate interdisciplinary conflict, which can create greater opportunities to engage with divergent perspectives and practice "conflict dialogue" and cultural inclusion (Bickmore 2011; Bickmore and Parker 2014; Parker 2012). Most conflict resolution educators already reflect on social conflicts by engaging with dialogic curriculum. This study encourages such inquiry in its correlation of critical reflection on conflict resolution practices in CSPs' school and workplace communities and their understanding of culturally appropriate and responsive practices. In this way, this research shows how interdisciplinary professionals address issues of diversity and conflict and how they

use these opportunities to develop their culturally appropriate practice. The study also raises questions about what kind of professional education, both in-service and pre-service, is necessary to prepare CSPs to respond to conflicts using proactive, culturally responsive conflict resolution tools.

People with previous interdisciplinary experience felt that they dealt with cultural conflict to a greater extent compared with those who did not have experience in an interdisciplinary team setting. Thus, when preparing CSPs to respond to issues of culture and ethnicity, having more experience with confronting differences appeared to make people more aware of how culture and diversity are salient factors in their conflict negotiation and management style.

Structured classroom-based learning about conflict and diversity can serve as a resource for critical social academic engagement, both inside and outside the classroom. Various factors influence conflict escalation in relation to culture and diversity, including power, privilege, hierarchy, miscommunication, and labeling. It is important to think about how conflict is understood and how various stakeholders interpret conflict and their responses to it. This understanding may shape how we teach various approaches to conflict resolution.

Affirming CSPs' professional identities is a precursor to collaborative teamwork because "professionals need to be secure in their own roles to know what they can offer and in turn what they can rely on others to provide" (Bronstein 2003, 300). The value of collaborative, interdisciplinary practice reflexively contributes to CSPs' development of skills and knowledge of working cooperatively and collaboratively and developing stronger communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills (Redman 2006). Practicing conflict in interdisciplinary teams leads to many societal benefits, because it trains CSPs to solve real issues. In one example of this, Nandan and London (2013) articulate a systems framework for structuring interdisciplinary teams in higher education training, where "professionals and practitioners from health care, social work, criminal justice and elementary/secondary schools interact and work on interprofessional teams addressing cases involving children in abusive situations" (820). Through training in systems thinking and interdisciplinary collaboration, each professional can contribute to assessing various intervention strategies that will best serve the child, patient, or client (Nandan and London 2013; Orchard, Curran, and Kabene 2005).

It is imperative for conflict resolution trainers to move beyond the surface level when dealing with cultural conflicts; these issues require critical conflict

dialogue. We need to refine our approach to conflict resolution training in ways that move beyond acknowledging cultural differences; we need to move more purposefully toward integrating diversity and offering spaces for the inclusion of differences. This includes pedagogical interventions, reviewing course syllabi for cultural competencies, and supporting faculty members interested in integrating critical cultural conflict dialogue in their classrooms and trainings. Ongoing support and training are necessary.

This is not new knowledge. It is an important call to action, particularly because of the role CSPs play in our society. Field-based practice is not enough to serve as signature pedagogies. CSPs also need more intensive in-class, interdisciplinary training to engage in conflict dialogue about their experiences and approaches to conflict.

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Christina Parker is a lecturer at Ryerson University and the University of Toronto.