Merry’s Conflict Personal Statement

I am pursuing majors in Social Justice and Sociology, a Conflict Studies Certificate and a Women’s Studies minor. When deciding on what I was going to study, I started by just taking a few courses in Social Justice and Sociology. Then I took The Role of Conflict in Social Change and it connected all the pieces together for me. This prompted me to take more Conflict Studies courses to ensure that it was something I wanted to do. When looking at how my studies overlap it is easiest to break down by study. Sociology is the study of our (U.S. based) society. Social Justice focuses on the social problems that our society faces. I see Conflict Studies as an approach to examining these problems and Women’s Studies focuses in on one particular set of social problems that affect all of our society.

When deciding on the track for my Conflict Studies Certificate, I knew that I did not want to pursue the Sociocultural track, only because my Sociology major is broadening my perspective. I have chosen the Interpersonal Conflict track, which is always shaped by the larger sociocultural context that I am already learning through Sociology. I chose this track because I think looking towards future careers and what I want to do, most of the conflict I will be focusing on is the interpersonal conflict that plays into the larger sociocultural level of conflict. For example, right now, I am very passionate about power-based personal violence and a lot of the work with that is on the interpersonal level, but it relates to the higher level of rape culture, sexism and the patriarchal structure of our society. When examining this on the inter-personal level, I am working with victim/survivors looking towards ways of safety planning. I have considered the possibility of going to Law School so I can work within the legal system to increase penalties and further help victim/survivors on not only the interpersonal level, but the more institutional level. I also have contemplated working in different batterer intervention programs because that is another problem within our society of not giving perpetrators any help to stop the abusive behavior. I also have contemplated going to work more in mediation. This is something that I discovered that I naturally gravitate towards and is something I am considering. All of these are working with people on the interpersonal level, but it relates to the sociocultural levels as well like the issue of rape culture or the prison industrial complex within our society. I don’t want my perspective to ever be narrowed and I think the best way of ensuring that is by not only studying the sociocultural level through my other majors, but examining the interpersonal through my conflict studies.

Most of my courses are focused on group dialogue (Intergroup Dialogue on Race and Intergroup Dialogue on Disability). From taking these courses so far, yes, they focus on group dynamics, but they also focus on the interpersonal relationships and how those play a role into not only the group dynamics, but the ability to organize for social change for these societal conflicts. I believe that these courses do teach me the group and organizational track, but also each has a unique factor that touches on the interpersonal conflict within each of those areas.

At this point, I am still figuring everything out, but I am sure that Conflict Studies is the right path for me and will benefit me in whatever path I go as far as career.

List of Conflict Studies Courses for Certificate:

* ***Introduction to Conflict Studies***  
  "Goals: This multi-disciplinary course introduces students to the major approaches to understanding conflict at the interpersonal, organizational and socio-cultural levels.  
  Content: Students study how conflict is understood from a range of disciplinary perspectives and in a wide variety of settings so as to develop broad perspectives on the ways in which conflict can be analyzed."
* ***Approaches to Conflict Responses***
* ***Social Justice Capstone***  
  "Goals: This course will permit major students to integrate theory, knowledge, and practical experience gained in their major using a series of readings, fieldwork experiences, and a major project."
* ***Conflict Studies Personal Statement*e Courses:**
* ***The Role of Conflict in Social Change***  
  "Goals: To introduce students to basic concepts shared between conflict studies and social justice studies; to examine connections between social conflict and people's movements for social change; and to study particular movements through these conceptual lenses. Content: Students will learn to distinguish among interpersonal, organizational, and socio-cultural levels of conflict; be introduced to relevant social science frameworks; study the role of conflict in particular movements; and develop analyses of an aspect of that movement in which they are especially interested."
* ***Intergroup Dialogue on Disability  
  "***Goals: To learn about social identity, difference, and intersectionality, and how they are linked to social inequality, privilege and power; to explore sources of conflict in social interaction within and across identity groups; and to examine how individual experience is connected to intergroup relations, institutional structures and broader social context.

Content: Intergroup dialogue courses emphasize awareness and knowledge of particular social identities (such as race or dis/ability) and development of group interaction skills. Content includes what distinguishes dialogue as a form of social interaction; processes through which individuals form social identities; how identities shape interdependence, conflict, power, privilege and solidarity among and within groups; historical and contemporary perspectives on intergroup relations; and how identities and group membership inform possibilities for social change. Students will practice critical analysis skills with a focus on their own experiences and on group dynamics using key concepts in identity development and intergroup relations."

* ***Intergroup Dialogue on Race***  
  ***"***Goals: To learn about social identity, difference, and intersectionality, and how they are linked to social inequality, privilege and power; to explore sources of conflict in social interaction within and across identity groups; and to examine how individual experience is connected to intergroup relations, institutional structures and broader social context.

Content: Intergroup dialogue courses emphasize awareness and knowledge of particular social identities (such as race or dis/ability) and development of group interaction skills. Content includes what distinguishes dialogue as a form of social interaction; processes through which individuals form social identities; how identities shape interdependence, conflict, power, privilege and solidarity among and within groups; historical and contemporary perspectives on intergroup relations; and how identities and group membership inform possibilities for social change. Students will practice critical analysis skills with a focus on their own experiences and on group dynamics using key concepts in identity development and intergroup relations."

* ***Communication in Conflict***
* ***Internship: Sexual Offense Services of Ramsey County***