CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: A DEBATE OVER SEMANTICS OR A CRUCIAL SHIFT IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES?

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Abstract

With an overview of the literature on the term 'conflict transformation,' as opposed to 'conflict resolution,' the article considers the semantic nuances and operational differences between these two terms. It poses the question whether conflict transformation has truly brought new theoretical notions and application for practice to peace and conflict studies, or whether it is in essence simply a reformulation of the term conflict resolution. The author concludes that while these terms are used relatively interchangeably in terms of their meaning and application, there does seem to be a shift towards the term conflict transformation. However, it is also argued that the term conflict transformation still needs to be defined in more distinctive ways in order to illustrate how it either should replace the term conflict resolution or exist alongside it.

The term 'conflict transformation' is a relatively new invention within the broader field of peace and conflict studies. As a relatively new field, it is still in a process of defining, shaping, and creating terminology. During the 1990s a number of theorists (Galtung, 1995; Rupesinghe, 1995; Schwerin, 1995; Spencer and Spencer, 1995; Väyrynen, 1991) have assisted in solidifying what Lederach (1995a: 201) called "a shift" toward conflict transformation in the language used in the field and practice of peace research and conflict resolution.

During the early 1990s the term conflict transformation was not in common use among peace and conflict theorists. In fact, one can argue that the term has not been a core construct of the field for even a decade. Meanwhile, it has "accrued a number of meanings, including transformation of individuals, transformation of relationships, and transformation of social systems large and small" (Dukes, 1999: 48). I will analyze conflict transformation as a newly minted core construct in the field and outline how this term and its relationship to other terms such as conflict resolution is shaping our field.

In Laue's (1992: 301) discussion of the definitions and boundaries of peacemaking and conflict resolution, his operative terms were "peace," "peacemaking," "conflict resolution," and "process." The first references to transformation in the literature

normally appeared in a somewhat indirect or circuitous fashion. For example, Burton (1990: 2-3) contends that "by the resolution of conflict, we mean the transformation of relationships in a particular case by the solution of the problems which led to the conflictual behavior in the first place." This noted conflict resolution scholar also did not include a definition of conflict transformation in his relatively recent discussion of the field's language and processes (Burton, 1996). However, the idea of transforming conflict in order to mitigate or even end protracted social conflicts has now become an integral part of the lexicon used in the peace and conflict studies field.

The Need for a New Term

Citing Curle (1990), Kriesberg (1989) and Rupesinghe (1994), Lederach (1995b: 17), who has since become one of the principal proponents of the conflict transformation notion, proposes that this theoretical concept has "emerged in the search for an adequate language to explain the peacemaking venture." Moreover, he argues that transformation more closely acknowledges what social scientists such as Coleman (1956) and Boulding (1962: 17) have suggested about the role and dynamics of social conflict; namely that "it moves through certain predictable phases, transforming relationships and social organization." "Resolution," as Lederach (1995a: 201) subsequently noted, has been the better known and more widely recognized term. He argues that "perhaps unintentionally, this term carries the connotation of a bias toward 'ending' a given crisis or at least its outward expression, without being sufficiently concerned with the deeper structural, cultural, and long-term relational aspects of conflict" (1995a: 201).

In terms of its meaning and use a term does not really exist until it has a name, nor can it be utilized as a tool for meaningful communication within a discipline until the name, and its accompanying definitions, are broadly recognized and acknowledged as having efficacy. The term conflict transformation has become relatively widely used – in other words, it has been named – but it would not be true to say that its attendant definitions have been universally accepted. However, while there is a definite movement afoot to make clear distinctions between the terms conflict resolution and conflict transformation, they are still often used interchangeably both in common language usage and in the academic literature. The abundance of different definitions and interpretations of conflict transformation creates semantic difficulties. It underscores the need for clarity regarding this term that is now used as a way to describe, explain and put into operation the work of practitioners and theorists.

What is "Conflict Transformation"?

In the progression from conflict resolution to conflict transformation, the latter can be understood in several different ways. The growth of literature surrounding this topic, being prolific and diverse, has outpaced existing dictionary definitions. For example, Yarn's definition in the *Dictionary of Conflict Resolution* (1999: 121) has only a truncated summary of Lederach's work, which promotes "the concept of transformation over CONFLICT RESOLUTION and CONFLICT MANAGEMENT." This definition focuses on the "change[s] in the characteristics of a conflict" and on conflict transformation as a method of "inducing change in the parties' relationship through improving mutual understanding." The literature regarding this topic also addresses the relationship between conflict transformation and systemic change and peacebuilding (Alger, 1988; Jeong, 2000; Lederach 1997, 1998; Merry, 2000). The term conflict transformation now also signifies specific approaches to practice and training (Brubaker and Verdonk, 1999; Bock and Anderson, 1999; Green, 2002; Schrock-Shenk and Ressler, 1999; Schrock-Shenk and Stutzman, 1995).

Burgess and Burgess's *Encyclopedia of Conflict Resolution* (1997: 285-286) provides more in-depth descriptions on the diversity of developments around the term transformation. Citing the work of others, they note that there are at least three ways in which theorists and practitioners use the term. The first – referring to the work of Kriesberg, Northrup and Thorson (1989) – describes a fundamental change in the relationship between parties and a change in recognizing each others' ethnic and national aspirations. The second group of theorists (Harrington and Merry, 1988; Burton, 1990) posits that societies are transformed when "fundamental social and political changes are made to correct inequities and injustice to provide all groups with their fundamental human needs." Here transformation also is defined as the restructuring of social institutions as well as a redistribution of power from high-power groups to low-power groups. The third way refers to changes in individuals. This form of "transformative mediation" is exemplified by the work of Bush and Folger (1994) and is designed to change the consciousness and character of human beings.

Above and beyond these dictionary definitions, a number of authors have explained conflict transformation in the context of a continuum, generally beginning with 'conflict settlement,' then 'conflict management,' to 'conflict resolution,' and ending with 'conflict transformation' (Diamond, 1994; Kriesberg, 1997; Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse, 1999). Comparing the manner in which some authors have contrasted these terms provides some insight into the variety of definitions for, and subtle differences in, describing conflict transformation. In an overview of the development of the conflict resolution field, Kriesberg (1997: 64) emphasizes the way in which practitioners place a somewhat different emphasis on different terms such as "conflict," "dispute," "settlement," "resolution," and "transformation." Kriesberg makes a distinction between resolution and transformation: "… conflict resolution means solving

the problems that led to the conflict, and transformation means changing the relationships between the parties to the conflict …" For Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (1999:21) the term "has particular salience in asymmetric conflicts, where the aim is to transform unjust social relationships," hinting at the link between conflict transformation and social or systemic change.

Not everyone agrees that the term conflict transformation necessarily falls on a continuum. While some analysts see it as a significant departure from conflict resolution, others like Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (1999) view conflict transformation as a further development of conflict resolution. For them, the aim of conflict resolution is to transform conflict. Perhaps more importantly, they also suggest that the transformation concept provides some utility regarding our understanding of peace processes in the sense that transformation denotes a sequence of necessary transitional steps. Such a transformation represents not only removing the sources and causes of the situation that brought about the conflict, but also necessitates a psychic transformation in the attitudes and relationship between the parties. This underlying assumption—that conflict transformation provides for a transformation of the parties and their relationships, and structural changes that conflict resolution methodologies do not render—is obviously a part of the semantic subtleties, and maybe also operational differences of opinion with regards to these terms and their practical application.

The notion that social conflict (and its amelioration) can be delineated on a management-settlement-resolution-transformation continuum is not universally accepted. These categories are often viewed as part of a fluid and somewhat circular discussion of overlapping terms. While they afford us a way of developing a common vocabulary for the field, the possibility of a terminological dispute over these terms lie in the question of to what degree they should be defined rigidly or separately.

As a proponent of overlapping definitions, Diamond (1994: 3) defines conflict resolution as activities that "seek to discover, identify and resolve the underlying root causes of the conflict, " and conflict transformation as endeavors that "seek to change the conditions that give rise to the underlying root causes of the conflict." According to this distinction, conflict resolution activities are problem-solving or conflict analysis workshops; research, training, and educational programs; inter-group dialogue; reconciliation; and peacebuilding. Consequently, conflict transformation processes are seen more in terms of nation building, national reconciliation and healing, change agentry, and social transformation. By naming the antecedents of the two terms (conflict resolution and conflict transformation) in such a specific manner, Diamond (1994) departs somewhat from her own notion of not defining these terms with rigid boundaries. Rather than making such a differentiation regarding tasks and roles that would facilitate conflict resolution or conflict transformation, the range of activities to achieve sustainable peace can also be viewed as overarching and indeed as part of the same fluid process.

However, the notion of conflict transformation as simply a further extension of conflict resolution seems to be in contrast with some of the strongest proponents of the

term. In their view conflict transformation is a conceptual departure in theory and practice from conflict resolution. For these forerunners among the 'transformers' of conflict (Curle, 1990; Kriesberg, 1989; Rupesinghe, 1994), and especially for Lederach (1995a) who has become their main proponent, the term conflict transformation emerged from a search for a more precise term to describe the overall peacemaking and peacebuilding venture. In this concept they believe to have found a more holistic approach and understanding of their work that extends beyond the management or resolution of conflict. Moreover, for Lederach, conflict transformation offers more than the mere elimination or control of conflict (as is promised by the resolution or management of conflict). It points to the inherent dialectical process, the ability to transform the dynamic of the conflict and the relationship between the parties—indeed to transform the very creators of the conflict.

For Lederach (1995b: 17), this process provides "transformative human construction and reconstruction of social organization and realities." Building on the ideas of social scientists such as Coleman (1956) and Boulding (1962), he further claims that the notion of transformation more aptly represents the role and dynamics of social conflict as it moves through phases of transforming relationships and social organization. However, how is this different from the same social patterning and dynamic phases of conflict that lead to social or systemic change that is described in other texts on the topic (see, for example, Rubin, Pruitt and Kim, 1994)? Did the notion of conflict transformation truly put new ideas, and, therefore, new notions of practice in the hands of practitioners or analysts? Or did we simply get better, or clearer descriptions of the basic conflict resolution process?

For at least one peace scholar the answer is clear. In his investigation of "Conflict Resolution as Conflict Transformation," Galtung (1995: 51) offers reasons why a conflict transformation perspective has more to offer. He contends that underlying the conflict resolution perspective is an assumption that every conflict has a finite life and a clear end and can, therefore, be solved or declared intractable. From this argument—that conflicts are never-ending waxing and waning of social interactions—also flows the idea that the ongoing energy and behavioral contradictions that arise from this will be not be amenable to resolution, but needs to be transformed.

Not everyone is readily convinced that the term conflict transformation has greater application and value than conflict resolution. Mitchell (2002: 1) argues that "the concept of conflict transformation has emerged because of the corruption of the conception of resolution." He maintains that the "employment of this relatively new term of 'transformation' is a reaction to the growing misuse of the term 'resolution' to stand for almost anything short of outright victory, defeat, and revenge as an *outcome*, as well as for many *processes* involving overt violence ('bombing for peace') or covert coercion (economic sanctions to obtain parties' acquiescence to a dictated settlement) as 'resolution' methods" (2001:1).

For a conflict transformation proponent such as Lederach (1995b) frameworks require a long term transformative process in which hostile relations are modified by education, advocacy (nonviolent activism), and mediation. Even though his description of conflict transformation contains many elements similar to Lederach's model, Clements (1997: 8) has a somewhat different interpretation of the essential ingredients of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. He provides a systemic approach, maintaining that transformation occurs when "violent conflict ceases and/or is expressed in nonviolent ways and when the original structural sources (economic, social, political, military, and cultural) of the conflict have been changed...." (1997:8).

Noticeable, however, is that much of what is claimed about conflict transformation has, until recently, been attributed to the fundamentals of conflict resolution. For example, just as Clements (1997) claims that conflict can be transformed by the parties working it out themselves, by the work of third party intervenors, or by political intervention, advocates of conflict resolution theory have been making similar claims in terms of how conflicts get worked out or resolved. Even the argument about the need for systemic change in order to obtain conflict transformation – namely, for the conflict to be truly resolved and not to return in another form – is made by conflict resolution theorists (Scimecca, 1987). The social, political, and economic changes that Clements refers to are in many ways similar to what conflict resolution theorists describe as the underlying causes and sources of conflict. There are numerous examples of social conflict that were supposedly "resolved" only to return in another form because these systemic, underlying sources were never removed.

Depending on one's conception of the term, conflict transformation is not necessarily a new innovation. Mitchell (2002: 2) reminds us that "in the early days of conflict resolution practice, there was a clear understanding that many 'resolutions' certainly implied the need to bring about major structural changes in social systems, countries, and communities, as well as changes in fundamental relationships..." In other words, without such structural changes claims about genuinely acceptable, self-supporting and durable "resolutions" were not sustainable. This similarity between the aims of conflict resolution and conflict transformation weakens the argument of transformationalists who profess that systemic change, in order to end conflicts, is what distinguishes transformation from resolution.

There is no doubt, however, as Mitchell (2002: 1) has observed, that "it has become increasingly popular in the field of conflict studies to contrast processes leading to *conflict transformation* and those that are said to result in *conflict resolution*, with the strong implication that there are major differences between both processes and their respective outcomes..." More importantly, as Mitchell (2002: 1) correctly alludes to, is the clear implication (and often direct statement) "that transformation is a process that will make up for the inadequacies of mere resolution." The literature on conflict transformation has a strong underlying inference that this line of conceptual thinking rectifies the major deficiencies of conflict resolution theory and, indeed, practice.

An underlying premise of conflict resolution theory and practice is that it deals more with the conflict itself than with the system (political, social and economic) within which it was embedded – but not exclusively so. Referring to the works of Burton and Dukes in the early 1990s, Mitchell (2002) reasons that conflict resolution processes examine the parties' needs and options and seek to reach agreements that can bring about change in social systems and patterns of relationships. There is furthermore a strong bias among transformationalists to work towards systemic change. Moreover, in their writing they frequently imply that conflict resolution does not provide the necessary end-state to create peaceful societies:

> Conflict transformation refers to the process of moving from conflict-habituated systems to peace systems. This process is distinguished from the more common term of conflict resolution because of its focus on systems change. Social conflicts that are deep-rooted or intractable get these names because the conflict has created patterns that have become part of the social system. With the social system as the unit of analysis, the term "resolution" becomes less appropriate. Transforming deep-rooted conflicts is only partly about "resolving" the issues of the conflict – the central issue is systemic change or transformation. Systems cannot be "resolved," but they can be transformed, thus we use the term conflict transformation (Notter and Diamond, 1996).

Implied in this definition – used by the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (see also Diamond, 1996) as a guidance for their conflict intervention work – is the notion that conflict transformation is a continuous process. Transformationalists see this concept as an improvement over conflict resolution because conflict resolution supposedly "resolves" the conflict but ultimately sets the parties up for failure. The argument, of course, is that it leaves the system within which the conflict occurs, or the underlying causes of the conflict, untouched. In that sense, conflict transformation has social change as its ultimate purpose. Furthermore, it contrasts conflict resolution as a theory and process that leads to a practical end-state with the more open-ended, and indeed continuous, conflict transformation process. A number of theorists have alluded to the idea of conflict transformation as an ongoing, never-ending process (see Galtung, 1996; Väyrynen, 1991; Lederach, 1997), and as a way to create "new social relations, institutions, and visions" (Väyrynen 1999: 151).

In sum, the definitions and pronouncements concerning the term conflict transformation are clearly still in flux and constantly in the process of being refined. While there seems to be some agreement on the basic terminology, there is still no consensus on the theoretical and practical applicability of the term.

When and How Does Conflict Transformation Occur?

A conceptual framework for what exactly is meant by conflict transformation – how it works in practice, who does it. and why it should be done – is under construction. Here also, as is the case with definitions of the term, there are a host of different conceptual interpretations. As Mitchell (2002: 5) observes, a variety of somewhat contradictory answers are given to the question of what is transformed, "depending partly upon which analysts are writing and the social level of the conflicts that they discuss." The two most obvious answers to this question, according to Mitchell, are firstly, that the conflict itself is transformed, and secondly, that some aspect of the socio-political system in which the conflict occurs is transformed. Both Mitchell (2002) and Väyrynen (1991) point out that the answer to the question of 'what' is being transformed is further complicated by the fact that conflicts are inherently dynamic phenomena. The conflict behaviors of disputing parties go through certain incremental transformations and in the process conflicts are either escalated or deescalated (Rubin, Pruitt and Kim , 1994). These transformations—such as contentious behaviors or conciliating gestures—can occur on either side of a conflict but they are normally mirrored by the other side and, therefore, affect the conflict as a whole. Such transformational changes in the parties and the nature of the conflict appear to be 'micro' transformations, while changes in the socio-political system within which the conflict is embedded connote 'macro' transformations.

In referring to both micro and macro transformations, Väyrynen (1991: 163) charts four ways in which transformations happen:

- *Actor Transformation* refers to the internal changes in major parties to the conflict, or the appearance of new actors.
- *Issue Transformation* alters the political agenda of the conflict, in essence, altering what the conflict is about.
- *Rule Transformation* redefines the norms that the actors follow in their interactions with each other, and demarcates the boundaries of their relationship.
- *Structural Transformation* alludes to changes that may transpire in the system or structure within which the conflict occurs, which is more than just the limited changes among actors, issues and roles.

Väyrynen adds that while conflict transformation happens intentionally, it can also happen unintentionally. This unintended transformation process is normally a byproduct of the broader social and economic changes that the actors within a conflict neither planned nor could avoid, but to which they have to adjust.

Lederach (2000a) answers the 'what' question of conflict transformation slightly differently, and links it in a sense to 'how' and 'where' it gets done. He echoes some of the points in Väyrynen's list, albeit with new terminology. The four dimensions that should be taken into consideration in order to transform systems can be summarized as follows:

- *Personal*, or individual changes in the emotional, perceptual, and spiritual aspects of conflict;
- *Relational*, or changes in communication, interaction, and interdependence of parties in conflict;
- *Structural*, or changes in the underlying structural patterns and decision making in conflict; and
- *Cultural*, or group/societal changes in the cultural patterns in understanding and responding to conflict (Schirch, 1999: 38).

In yet another version of the circumstances under which conflict transformation transpires, Augsburger (1992) claims that conflict transformation, as opposed to conflict management or conflict resolution, occurs when there is a metamorphosis, or at least considerable change, in one of three different elements. The process of transformation first transforms attitudes by changing and redirecting negative perceptions. Secondly, it transforms behavior, and lastly, transforms the conflict itself by seeking to discover, define, and remove incompatibilities between the parties. Northrup (1989), in turn, contends that the contrast between settlement and transformation is best explained through the proximity of change to core identity constructs. Transformation has a better prognosis of occurring when there are specific modifications in the identities of the parties, the nature of their relationship is redefined, and changes in their core sense of self are possible. Such changes, as Northrup points out, take considerable time because of the rigid attitudes and behaviors among parties that set in over time in intractable conflicts.

In describing transformative approaches to conflict on their website, Burgess and Burgess (n.d.) mention a different term – "transformative conflict resolution" – which supports the notion that transformation is essentially an extension of conflict resolution. In practice this term echoes Northrup's work on the changes needed for transformation in the sense that long-term transformation is related to fundamental changes in the attitude and behavior of the parties and in their relationship. Burgess and Burgess's definitions again indicate the very wide range of definitions and semantic interpretations of the term transformation (http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/transform/index.htm). They note, for example, that transformational conflict resolution takes many forms and is related to a number of other concepts—among them are transformative mediation, analytical problem solving, dialogue, and collaborative learning. For purists in terms of what conflict transformation is supposed to convey in theory and in practice these terms and processes would clearly fall outside their understanding of the term. Again, for others, all collaborative processes can ultimately contribute to their conception of how transformation is attained. Which again begs the question: does this term have a clear meaning if it can be narrowly and very broadly defined?

Inherent in the above descriptions of what conflict transformation is, lies the notion that personal, relational, and structural transformation is essential to deal effectively with conflicts. What is less clear from these descriptions is exactly how this process transforms conflicts, who is involved, and how long it will take. Based on the

encompassing objectives outlined thus far, time factors seem to be an issue in obtaining successful conflict transformations. Most people are willing to enter into conflict intervention processes such as mediation because such processes are focused or limited in their scope (Mayer, 2000). Yet, transformation – both personal and large scale social, political, or economic – requires a great deal of time and effort. When changing people or societies becomes part of an ulterior purpose, rather than primarily focusing on the conflict at hand, neither objective in the end may be achieved. As Väyrynen (1999: 151) warns, "a normative approach to conflict transformation runs a risk of becoming a movement for the general improvement of society rather than just mitigating and redefining the conflict."

Among the growing number of theorists who are writing about conflict transformation and "how to achieve it," Lederach (1995a: 202-213) provides the greatest specificity. His comprehensive framework diagrams a number of central and guiding conceptual elements. This framework includes an integrated perspective for short- and long-term transformation (for instance, getting the parties to the table or achieving a cease-fire versus the longer term challenges of land, electoral, constitutional, or military reform). Secondly, this comprehensive framework builds on the view that an infrastructure for establishing peace is needed. Creating an infrastructure or method of approaching conflict transformation not only legitimizes the process but also integrates multiple levels of the population affected, both in terms of the input in the peace process as well as in its implementation. Lederach (1998) identifies three levels that need to be impacted within his 'holistic' approach to conflict transformation within the affected population:

- the top leadership, or the level at which negotiations to end conflict normally take place;
- national leaders such as professionals and intellectuals from sectors where problem solving workshops or training in conflict resolution would be appropriate;
- and finally, local leaders in indigenous non-government organizations (NGOs) and grassroots organizations, where the impact would be on local peace commissions and grassroots training.

The challenges of building a peace constituency in and among all of these population levels lead Lederach (1995: 211) to the short term question of who should broker a peace process and to the "long term issue of who is involved at what level in sustaining the transformation across the affected population over time." Referring to the work of Nader and Todd (1978), Gulliver (1979), Avruch, Black and Scimecca (1991), and Augsberger (1992), he also addresses the need for "cultural relevance" in transforming conflict, suggesting that these "cultural modalities and resources for handling conflict in a given setting are not only important to identify but should be seen as foundational for building a comprehensive transformative framework" (1995a: 213).

Lederach has since greatly augmented his framework for transformation processes. In one of these works, Lederach (1998: 242-243) advocates for a post-conflict phase

where the peace-building system is not driven by a hierarchical (top down) focus, but by an organic political process, which "envisions peace-building as a web of interdependent activities and people." In this vision of transformational peace-building, the inter-party or inter-group politics of the post-conflict phase occur within an open system that encourages participation from a broad base of participants from all levels of the affected societies, and not only from a narrow group of leaders at the official bargaining table. To this end Lederach (1998:243) expounds on a nested paradigm of peace-building activities. This includes immediate actions such as "defining the agenda" of tasks that need to be addressed. These tasks may range from demobilization and disarmament to governance and employment activities and affect various people, structures and processes. The "transition" activity as part of this nested paradigm identifies taking agenda tasks to implementation, for example, providing transport and relocation facilities for repatriating refugees. This transition phase is embedded in "transformative processes" that have to deal with more pertinent issues such as the role of the military in newly formed structure of governments. These peace-building activities are nested within a "search for relational reconciliation" in which issues are not merely resolved but relationships must be restored.

To this paradigm he adds four distinctions in post-conflict peace-building: the social-psychological (issues regarding identity, self esteem, emotion, trauma and grief); the socioeconomic (providing financial aid, retraining, employment and development); the social-political (matters pertaining to demobilization, disarmament, troop integration, and professionalization); and the spiritual (concerns about healing, forgiveness, and mutual acknowledgement). With these overarching aims, Lederach creates a framework that addresses both transformative and relational concerns. In sum, this multi-dimensional approach advocates for a broad set of dimensions, and more importantly, provides a number of different and complimentary ways of operationalizing or implementing transformative change. In other words, it furnishes the 'how' of transformation and assists both conflict theorists and practitioners to come to terms with the need to address peacemaking in a more holistic manner, by utilizing a multitude of tasks at various stages of a conflict.

For third party intervenors the task of moving a violent conflict towards a durable peace—to transform the conflict—also requires that they must devise a multitude of negotiation forums within which transformations must occur at nearly every level of society. Lund's (2001:16) "toolbox" for responding to conflict and building peace ranges from official and unofficial conflict management methodologies to political, economic, judicial, and military measures, as well as communications and educational peacebuilding measures. While Lund's classification and sub-categorization of these tasks are too numerous to list in detail, a cursory overview of the continuum of tasks can be provided. For example, official diplomacy tasks range from negotiation, conciliation and mediation to a number of other formal (government to government) activities, such as providing good offices, sending special envoys, diplomatic sanctions, and coercive diplomacy. The

scope of nonofficial conflict management is equally large, ranging from nonofficial facilitation, mediation and problem-solving workshops to the use of civilian peace monitors, nonviolent campaigns and cultural exchanges. This expansive catalogue of procedures to prevent or mitigate a conflict and build peace also gives special attention to political and governance measures (such as building political parties and civil society), as well as judicial and legal measures (which may include constitutional, judicial, legal and police reforms). Finally, the holistic nature of this toolbox of intervention activities are underscored by communications and educational measures which encompass the training of journalists, the professionalization of media systems, peace education and formal education projects. All this simply underscores the multiple levels of activities that can be part of a conflict transformation process.

Building on Curle's (1990) original model of conflict transformation, Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (1999: 17) have provided a different version of how to achieve conflict transformation in asymmetric conflicts. In this model, "the asymmetry inherent in situations of unbalanced power and unsatisfied needs is reduced by increased awareness, mobilization and empowerment leading to open confrontation where necessary before moving on to the negotiation of a new relationship and changed attitudes." The authors note that the elements within this conception are traditionally seen as conflict resolution. Situations of unbalanced power (oppression, injustice and latent conflict) go through a process of awareness and "conscientization" which eventually lead to mobilization of the weaker party, a confrontation with the stronger party, and ultimately the empowerment of the weaker party via negotiation and mediation.

In this power balancing design a larger process of transforming asymmetric relationships is envisioned similar to what was anticipated would eventually occur in South Africa. A year before President De Klerk announced the end of apartheid in South Africa, Hendrik W. van der Merwe (1989: 116), a pioneer in facilitating negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the apartheid government, observed that "the term 'conflict resolution' does not apply to fundamental social problems in South Africa." He argued that without radical change the underlying causes of conflict could not be completely removed in South Africa. Because apartheid caused gross inequalities and injustices that were built into the social and political institutions of South Africa, he concluded that "fundamental structural change [was] essential for constructive accommodation of conflict" (1989: 116). Since then, the conflict transformation process that van der Merwe was in essence advocating has culminated in new political institutions at all levels of government in which all South Africa's population groups participate, regardless of their race and ethnicity.

One other model of conflict transformation that warrants mentioning is dialogue as a form of conflict transformation, as is evidenced by the work of Rothman (1998), Saunders (1999) and Yankelovich (1999). Negotiations between disputing parties often take the form of polarized debates where neither side tries very hard to gain insight or understanding into the beliefs and concerns of the other side. Facilitated dialogues—

where third parties encourage the parties to deal with the concerns of the opposing party—can create moments of transition or become vehicles for transformative insights and actions by the participants. Such endeavors have the potential of being catalysts for change by furnishing transitional moments that unlock or dissolve polarized positions. They are by their very nature forums that encourage parties to move beyond the status quo, and as such dialogues are transformational processes. Whether they occur in private or in public, the major goal of dialogue processes is to change conflictual relationships. This, of course, is also what the transformative movement describes as one of its major tasks. But, is it also how the conflict resolution literature has always framed one of the basic goals of that process, which again raises the issue about whether we are dealing here with different processes or different terminology describing the same process?

Although a discernible literature is developing on how conflicts can be transformed, it is often only in retrospect that a transformational action, moment, or shift in the relationship between the parties can be recognized. The precise point at which intractable, never-ending, conflicts that are most often linked to ethnic and other identity based issues become tractable, or can be transformed, is often only visible years after the process has been concluded (Kriesberg, 1998). In explaining how intractable conflicts move to tractability, normally as a result of several developments, Kriesberg (1998: 337) summarized much of the preceding literature on conflict transformation:

> Such movement arises from changes in the relationship between adversaries, from changes within one of the major adversaries, and from changes in the struggle's external context. Often elements from two or three of these sources converge and combine together to form ways out of the conflict. The process that brings about the transformation of an intractable conflict into a tractable one entails the interaction between a set of changing conditions and of new policies, both long-term and short.

Conflict Transformation as Empowerment

Inherent in both the models of Lederach (1998) and that of Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (1999) are individuals, groups, and organizations being empowered to negotiate new relationships and structures for post-conflict society. Transformation, according to Mayer (2000: 110), happens "primarily through the process of empowerment and recognition that is a potential part of every conflict resolution process." In agreement with this view, Schwerin (1995: 6) declares empowerment the "core concept or value of Transformational Politics," and moreover, that "empowerment is central to the theoretical and ideological concerns of most transformationalist groups and movements…." Broadly speaking, this assessment is also shared by Lederach (1995a: 212) who describes empowerment as "the procedural element of validating and providing space for proactive involvement in conflict transformation."

Schwerin (1995) builds on the work of Sartori (1984) and provides some definition and clarification to this much-maligned term. Empowerment, he argues, is the leitmotif of the transformational movement and can be delineated into eight primary components: self-esteem, self-efficacy, knowledge and skills, political awareness, social participation, rights and responsibilities, and access to psychological, social and material resources. This list reiterates in a different manner many of the most basic components of transformational theory, in the sense that it refers in direct and indirect ways to personal, relational, and systemic change. Schwerin's (1995, 1998) work also provides the beginnings of what seems to be severely lacking in the conflict transformation literature, namely theoretical import from other disciplines regarding this term, its meaning and practical utility.

According to Schwerin (1998: 116), underlying the work of the Transformational Politics Section of the American Political Science Association (APSA) since 1991, is the notion that "existing social, economic, and political systems are seriously flawed and dysfunctional…" Moreover, transformationalists such as Schwerin (1998: 116) portend that "major structural transformations are necessary to obtain greater social justice, more participatory democracy, environmentally sustainable economic development, peace, and prosperity." Another member of this school of transformationalists lists a number of steps towards political transformation such as making the personal political, having a more participatory community, and practicing good governance (Woolpert, 1998: 174-183). A third member of this diverse group of policy analysts, policymakers, scholars and practitioners, Gilbert (1998), expounds on the importance of governance as a form of transformation by elucidating the transformational value of political leadership, using the example of the Czech leader Vaclav Havel. In his article on "Good Governance" as the ideology of transformation Williams (1997) also stresses this role. The opposite of the leadership or governance coin, of course, is grassroots involvement. Nordstrom (1995) highlights the sophisticated work that local-level citizens and groups often do in fomenting conflict cessation and transformation. She does, however, regret the fact that this work often "goes unrecognized and unsupported by larger (inter)national agencies," and calls this one of the "saddest barriers to conflict transformation" (1995:110).

What seems to be left out of the discussion thus far, and indeed out of most of the literature on conflict transformation, is any in-depth discussion of the role of third parties or conflict intervenors. Questions about 'who' are transformationalists and 'why' they are performing their professional and social roles seem largely unaddressed. The moral and ethical foundations of outsiders who are endeavoring to transform individuals, relationships, or systems in societies of which they are not a part should be part of this ongoing debate around the term and its application. It does not seem sufficient for peace and conflict theorists or practitioners to report, as Williams (1997: 245) does with regards to NGOs in the field, that they are "informed by a conception of the good, which drives their desire to do good to others by transforming them."

Resolution versus Transformation

In his analysis of conflict transformation as a concept that claims to signify an understanding of something that is "beyond resolution," Mitchell (2002: 1) asks "What Does Conflict Transformation Actually Transform?" Moreover, he laments the dichotomy between the terms "resolution" and "transformation,"

> Firstly, because the addition of yet another term to those already obfuscating the study and understanding of conflict – conflict formation, conflict management, conflict reduction, conflict containment, conflict mitigation – seems unnecessary. Secondly, because original uses of the term 'conflict resolution' appear more than adequate to cover the additional implications that seem to be generally involved in the idea of a 'transformative' process or solution (2002: 2).

As to whether conflict transformation is a different and perhaps more comprehensive process than conflict resolution, Mitchell (2002) concludes that the two approaches are closely related and have many things in common. However, he purports to be less sure that the two terms are simply different words for basically the same phenomena.

A number of authors explain conflict transformation as an extension or a part of conflict resolution, while others make clear distinctions between the terms. In relation to international conflict, Wallensteen (1991: 130) connects conflict resolution and transformation, noting that "a successful case of conflict transformation is one where the parties, the issues, and the expectations are changed so that there is no longer a fear of war arising from the relationship." Dukes (1996: 7) also links the two terms in a similar fashion. He contrasts "public conflict resolution" with management approaches to resolving conflict, arguing that "public conflict resolution is not limited to the settlement of disputes; rather it is a vehicle for transforming citizenry, communities, and the private and public institutions of contemporary democratic society."

In his worthwhile contribution to the debate about appropriate goals for conflict resolution practitioners, Mayer (2000: 108) poses a question that again connects resolution and transformation: "is conflict resolution about ending disputes, building peace, achieving social justice, or transforming relationships?" He critiques the belief that "dispute resolution" has enormous potential to encourage personal transformation, and comments that "transformation often does occur as a result of experiences people have with conflict and its resolution…" (2000:110). Instead of combining the two terms as an interconnected unit, Väyrynen (1999: 154) sets them up as a progression, with transformation preceding resolution: "In the best of cases, the redefinition of issues, actors, rules, and interests may transform the nature of the conflict so that resolution becomes possible." These examples demonstrate just some of the variety and subtleties in the distinctions made between conflict resolution and conflict transformation.

One can also differentiate between resolution and transformation as Mitchell (2002: 19) does in the following analysis:

Resolution has tended to deal with conflicts by operating close to official efforts and to deal with decision making elites or, at least, with opinion makers and influentials. Transformation both advocates and practices the conception that processes have to take place at all levels, including the very grass roots. Resolution has a tendency to concentrate upon the immediate and the shorter term, its advocates arguing that dealing with the issues and the deeper interests producing a current situation of intractable conflict is enough of a problem in itself. Transformation has deliberately included 'the aftermath' in its focus, purposefully building in approaches and processes that deal with conflict 'residues' – traumas, fears, hurts and hatreds – which, even if one major conflict has been resolved, will remain to poison futures and ensure that later conflicts will be prosecuted in a spirit of intransigence, if not revenge.

In further defense of resolution, Mitchell remarks that in order to achieve a resolution, major structural changes do not necessarily have to occur first. In conflict resolution theory, changes in relationships have not been afforded "a central place in resolutionary approaches" because it was normally "assumed that these will 'naturally' follow once the conflict at issue has been successfully resolved" (Mitchell, 2002: 20).

Transformation: Case Studies and Other Settings

Systemic change, according to transformationalists, is the most critical element that needs to be addressed for the transformation process to be completed. In providing "post-conflict reconstruction" (Holtzman, Elwan and Scott, 1998; Hampson, 1996), conflict transformation is often defined in terms of economic and social reconstruction projects that are crucial to the success of the peace process. Economic and social transformation, according to Crocker and Hampson (1996), take months to plan, years to implement, and requires a level of resources that most NGOs cannot provide. They point to the role of the World Bank to provide loans and credit lines in order to coordinate reconstruction aid. Conflict transformation theorists seemingly do not connect systemic change directly with the minutiae of economic and social transformation. Historically there has also been a reluctance from many 'conflict resolution' practitioners in the field not to want to connect too closely to governmental or international actors who perform such roles in order not to compromise their own independence and neutrality in the eyes of conflictants.

In order to transform post-conflict societies, international initiatives emerge in a multitude of ways. This phenomenon is exemplified in Lund, Rubin and Hara's (1998: 72) study of efforts undertaken in Burundi:

These projects aimed to train politicians in the skills and values required by democratic institutions, promote human rights and humanitarian law, train Hutus and Tutsis in conflict resolution, teach the 'culture of peace,' promote reconciliation through working together on common problems, broadcast public radio programs teaching conflict resolution and interethnic peace, fund indigenous NGOs of various sorts (women's, peace movement, dialogue groups), sponsor dialogues, take selected leaders on trips to study conflict resolution and interethnic or interracial projects in South Africa and the United States, produce educational materials on democracy, coordinate efforts and strategic thinking among the various organizations involved, work with elders to reintegrate displaced and dispersed people into their *collines* (hills-the units of rural settlement in Burundi and Rwanda), and more.

According to this study, in spite of the number of organizations that undertook these different sorts of efforts, many transformational tasks such as integrating Hutus into the state structure, training the police and judiciary and, most significantly, curbing the violence, did not materialize. These tasks surpassed the capacities of the NGOs, and no states offered the necessary resources. This detailed case study illustrates the lack of coordination and ultimate implementation that thwart the work of transformational practitioners in their many guises, be it individual practitioners, or local, national and international actors. Lund, Rubin, and Hara (1998) conclude that the human and financial resources of thousands of professionals in hundreds of governments and international organizations focused on Burundi were not appropriately applied. Moreover, the work of all these specialists, initiatives and programs formed no coherent policy in order to curb the violence and instability in Burundi.

This case study again brings up the specter of moral and ethical dilemmas in transformational intervention, and the medical metaphor of ethical intervention – a metaphor that the economist and long term development specialist Mary B. Anderson (1996) has explored so effectively in her work, *Do No Harm: Supporting Local Capacities for Peace Through Aid.* In discussing post-conflict reconstruction and the role of the World Bank, Holtzman, Elwan and Scott (1998: 14) stress that reconstruction does not necessarily entail reinstating the infrastructure that existed before the onset of the conflict:

Conflict, particularly long-lasting conflict, transforms societies, and a return to the past may not be possible or desirable. Often, the inequities and fragility of the economics and weak governance structures of such societies have played a significant role in creating the conditions for conflict. In such cases what is needed is a reconstruction of the *enabling conditions* [italics in original] for a functioning peacetime society in the economy and society and in the framework of governance and the rule of law.

Holtzman, Elwan and Scott (1998: 22) also provide lessons and recommendations from the Rwanda experience in terms of the transition from war to peace. They reiterate many of the lessons in Lund, Rubin, and Hara's (1998) analysis of Burundi: the failure of the international community to provide adequate support for the government; the need to channel greater proportions of resources to local and central governmental agencies; the development of coordination and division of labor among NGOs; as well as the need to establish an effective system of justice to make perpetrators of genocide accountable.

Inherent in these brief case study analyses is the need for well-documented case studies as they pertain to systemic change and post-conflict transformation, in order to design more effective long-term transitional strategies. In one of the very few comprehensive case study analyses of conflict transformation, Auvinen and Kivimäki (1997: 3) emphasize that the philosophy behind the conflict transformation approach "is that in conflicts there are causes or reasons more fundamental than are expressed on the level of disputes." Apartheid South Africa was indeed, as they point out, a prime example of a conflict that was "structurally caused by economic, political, indentitive, discursive and other structures" (1997:3).

The various studies on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see Villa-Vicencio and Verwoerd, 2000; Graybill, 2002) as a form of relational reconciliation (Lederach: 1998) also need to be included in any study of post-conflict transformation. In their application of conflict transformation theory to conflict in the Sudan, Zimbabwe, Chad and Lebanon, Atlas and Licklider (1999: 36) provide a somewhat different definition of conflict transformation. Their definition of conflict transformation as a process "whereby the conflict either becomes less important, or is pursued without using mass violence" underlines the need to learn from different ways in which the word is applied to real cases.

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Conflict Transformation

As alluded to before, the work of most transformationalists is lacking in interdisciplinarian perspectives. There is a substantial literature on the roles of economic and political systems in social change, which is not given attention by conflict transformation theorists. The economic theory of systemic change in transformation (Klaus, 1994; Wagener, 1993), and the economic changes in Eastern Europe and its relationship to systemic change (Åslund, 1994; Csaba,1995) are examples of this kind of related scholarship. For an in-depth look at the role of political transformation in both industrial and socialist or post-socialist societies, the work of Adamski (1993) and Kriesberg and Segal (1992) can be consulted. Specific examples of political transformation can be found in writings relating to constitutionalism (Hart, 2001, Nakarada, 1993), class structures (Berberoglu, 1994), revolution as transformation (Amin et al., 1990), agricultural transformation (Kolawole, 1993; Brockett, 1998), and the role

of religious work in social transformation (Nelson, 1992). Notably, the social and political movements and phenomena that interest transformationalists are indeed varied. In Schwerin's (1995: 5) categorization they include:

> (1) peace movements and other social movements (see Zisk 1992), (2) democratic movements (Diamond 1994), (3) new models of strong or mass participatory democracy (Barber 1984; Mansbridge 1983), (4) tools for enhancing democratic participation, such as teledemocracy (see Etzioni 1993a; Becker and Slaton 1991), (6) communitarianism (see Bellah et al. 1985; Etzioni 1993b; Barber 1992), (7) individual transformation (see Halpern 1991; Abalos 1993), (8) transforming leadership (see Burns 1978; Fishell 1992; Couto 1993), (9) transformational teaching (see Couto 1994; Schwerin 1992), (10) models of transformational research (see Gaventa 1985; Yeich and Levine 1992), (11) new transformational paradigms and quantum theories (see Becker 1991). Thus, Transformational Politics as a field of inquiry, is as diverse and dynamic as its phenomenon of interest for theory, research and teaching.

A Shift from Conflict Resolution to Conflict Transformation?

What Mitchell (1994: 136) described as "a growing interest in the conception of *conflict transformation*" has now developed into a fully-fledged discussion about its definition, conceptual value, and practical application. Perhaps unintentionally, or in some cases more purposefully, peace and conflict theorists are either promoting the term or are being cautiously skeptical about its utility, especially if it means having conflict transformation replace conflict resolution as the core concept of the field. It would be unfortunate if this debate were to develop into a schools of thought phenomenon, not recognizing the theoretical and operational benefits of both conflict resolution and conflict transformation. In this regard we may well heed Wehr and FitzSimmons' (1988: 475) warning to conflict resolution researchers that jealously guarding "home turfs" will only compound the problem of developing conceptual frameworks in the field.

Dukes (1999: 48) observes that while the many connotations of conflict transformation vary considerably by author, they do share at least one critical element: they recognize "the impact of the conflict resolution process on parties, relationships, and institutions beyond the immediate issues under dispute." Of late, the work of a number of conflict transformation theorists seem to imply a pilgrimage or journey from conflict resolution to conflict transformation (Galtung, 1995; Lederach, 2000b; Väyrynen, 1999). Implicit in these discussions of a movement from conflict resolution to conflict transformation, is the implication of a shift from one to the other. At this stage, however, it is difficult to ascertain whether we are amidst a conceptual paradigm shift regarding these two terms. From a reading of the literature it is at the very least obvious that the supposedly more holistic term conflict transformation has attracted a number of theorists

away from what they deemed to be a more narrow definition of conflict resolution. In a Kuhnian (1970: 10) sense, it also seems apparent that conflict transformation has captivated an enduring group of disciples and that conflict resolution(ists) now have "all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners [transformationalists] to resolve." The old paradigm of conflict resolution is clearly being revised if not in the process of being replaced.

Unfortunately the link between conflict transformation theory and its practical application still appears weak. However, using the term 'transformation' is now a trend in both training manuals (see Schrock-Shenk and Ressler, 1999; Schrock-Shenk, 2000) as well as in describing conflict resolution practice (Bock and Anderson, 1999; Brubaker and Verdonk, 1999; Opffer, 1997). Moreover, there is a tendency in some of the literature to use the word transformation as a marketing tool without giving definition or substance to the term, its relationship to conflict resolution, or exactly how conflict transformation occurs in practice.

A Final Note

The core concepts used in the field as discussed in this article are without doubt value-laden. Further evidence of this can be found in the way various academic institutions employ these terms in naming and describing their programs and their work. The trend towards conflict transformation is visible in one or two of the newer academic programs, and also in the manner that practitioners are starting to label their work and training activities. Clearly, both theorists and practitioners use terms such as dispute settlement, conflict management, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation very purposefully in deconstructing the meaning and application of their work. In doing that we are constantly defining and redefining the field of peace and conflict studies. The way in which conflict transformation is currently being deconstructed is a central part of that phenomenon.

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