

HAS CONFLICT RESOLUTION GROWN UP? TOWARD A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Hossain B. Danesh and Roshan Danesh

Abstract

This article provides a nascent developmental model of conflict resolution and explores how such a model challenges theorists and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution to engage with the concept of unity. The developmental model states that the ways in which human beings understand, approach, and attempt to resolve conflicts can be analogized to the developmental stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Further, the model argues that conflict resolution can occur in four modes—S-Mode (Self-Centered); A-Mode (Authoritarian); P-Mode (Power Struggle); and C-Mode (Consultative Mode). Each of these modes corresponds to a particular nature of conflict resolution that, respectively, may be survival based, force based, power based, or unity based. The authors suggest that the C-Mode remains largely unexplored and that conflict resolution is primarily constructed and understood today according to the dynamics of the A-Mode and P-Mode. The key to exploring the C-Mode is to analyze the concept of unity and its implications for both conflict resolution theory and practice.

The community of scholars, practitioners, and students who work in the field of conflict resolution is currently the object of a strong wave of criticism. Historically, the field has been exposed to attack from without. In recent years, however, the voices of discontent have increasingly been from within. One vehement strand of criticism has been the perceived co-optation of the movement by a particular subculture—lawyers (Goldberg, 1997). A movement that was once driven by a substantive and communitarian desire to create layers of social justice, equality, and peace, it is argued, has now been overtaken by procedural, liberal, and efficiency concerns. At another level, are disputes over the fundamentals of processes. For example, it is striking that after decades of thinking and practice there still exists robust disagreement about basic elements of the do's and don'ts of problem-solving

mediation (Currie, 1998). A further distinct criticism has been the limited amount of empirical research on the claims of the movement and a perceived lack of academic rigor.¹

The primary effect of these criticisms has been to highlight the unique complexities of the field of conflict resolution. Clearly, it is an interdisciplinary field, but it is also more than that. We can approach it from the hard sciences or the humanities; as a philosophy or a practice; as an individual or a community; as a skill or a theory. Because conflict not only has a unique presence and is distinct in a number of fields of knowledge—such as physics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, political science—but also has common elements in all its formulations, it might be better to think of conflict resolution as a transdisciplinary field. It denies the borders that modernity has imposed on knowledge, but not simply by being between (interdisciplinary) existing borders. It also transcends those borders, drawing upon and integrating knowledge and practices from across borders, and thus in important ways calls for a redrawing of the knowledge map. The many groupings represented within the movement are responding to shared phenomena from their unique vantage points, thus offering complementary readings of the same thing. For some, co-optation equals the right result, for others the worst possible one. For some, efficiency in the dispensation of justice is a social panacea, for others an evil.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there have been a diversity of responses to these criticisms. One predominant response has been fracturing and tribalization (Menkel-Meadow, 1997). A more positive response has been constructive engagement with the internal critics—and in particular the criticisms that the field needs new ideas and justifications and a response to the hegemony of proceduralism—and a call for change.² This paper is one attempt to engage with the challenge of responding to criticism by exploring new substantive directions that could, and should, inform our practice of conflict resolution. At the heart of our argument is the belief that the fundamental challenge facing conflict resolvers and theorists is to explore how the concept of unity might inform the field of conflict resolution.

This article approaches the relevance of unity for conflict resolution by offering a simple, stylized, general, and accessible developmental model of conflict resolution. The core idea underlying a developmental model is that as human individuals go through different stages of development, they experience conflicts differently, behave differently when in a state of conflict, and attempt to resolve conflicts in different ways. Having an understanding

¹ These criticisms are accompanied by a number of vexing issues that continue to plague mediation and other processes. Central among these are the difficulties of cross-cultural conflict resolution, as well as the cultural specificity of processes such as mediation generally. As well, issues of ethics, standards, and power balancing remain to be addressed.

² Transformative mediation is a good example. It attempts to define a new practice that is based on a reconceptualization of the history of the conflict resolution movement and willingness to look critically at the dominant styles and practices of mediation. It also seeks to recover and galvanize the more humane and communitarian roots of the conflict resolution movement without losing sight of the need for a clear praxis that can be efficiently used and is effectively transferable (Baruch Bush and Folger, 1994).

of these developmental stages offers insight into the behavior of disputants. It also allows us to evaluate resolution processes as appropriate or inappropriate depending on developmental stages and invites the conclusion that perhaps certain processes themselves have developmental traits and can be classified on a developmental axis. Finally, a developmental model suggests that the goal of conflict resolution at certain stages of development can and should be the creation of a state of unity.

The Utility of a Developmental Model

Social entities and the body politic have often been understood by analogy to the individual human organism. The ancient Chinese “thought the world came from the huge anthropos figure called Pan Ku” (Mindell, 1993: 18), and “Hindus believe we all live in the figure of Atman” (Mindell, 1993: 18). The body of Christ has endured as a metaphor for the world in many Christian traditions (Mindell, 1993: 18). In Muslim societies, philosophy employed similar metaphors. Ibn Khaldun, the great 14th-century thinker and father of sociology, fully developed a longstanding tradition of seeing the relative health and sickness of communities and houses in terms of the human body (Lewis, 1988: 127–28). Within the Ottoman context of the 17th century, the writer Katib Celebi saw society in organic terms going through stages of growth until death (Lewis, 1988: 24–25).

The appeal of the developmental idea is that it resonates potently with what is intimately familiar in our experience of life—growth. No living entity is exempt from the patterns of growth. In fact, growth and life are mutually interdependent: life creates growth and growth maintains life. This interdependence of life and growth is well understood and subject to sophisticated analysis in relation to individual human biology and psychology (Durkin, 1995: 301). In the contemporary study of society and social processes, it is less acceptable and less convincing to speak in developmental terms. This difference makes sense. Growth does not have the same objective facticity at the social level as it does in individual life. Human physical and psychological change is observable and in many respects inevitable. When we look for the operation of similar principles in social living entities such as the family, social institutions, and society as a whole, we are usually engaged in a more complex form of interpretation than simple observation.

Applying developmental analogies to nonbiological phenomena is also suspect because of the potentially dubious outcomes of such theories. In various guises they can be used to justify theories of superiority and oppression.³ They also tend to slip into an easy

³ Developmentalism has often been used as a justification for oppression or the ascribing of a pejorative connotation to particular cultures or peoples. Arguments in favor of modernization of many societies around the world have often been accompanied with the implication that premodern, traditional, or indigenous societies are inherently inferior, at an early stage of development, and must inevitably progress to become modern.

determinism, in which the future can be deemed inevitable. Suffice it to say such elemental determinism does not tend to withstand the tests of time.

With reference to conflict resolution, however, the possibilities for utilizing a developmental model are complex and tremendous, and in this paper we set out to employ a developmental model in three ways. First, and least controversial, we argue that individuals—both disputants and intervenors—interact within and attempt to resolve conflicts differently based upon the developmental stage at which they are. The relevance of this insight is that it means one of the challenges of conflict resolution processes might be to help individuals reflect upon and perhaps alter the developmental mode in which they approach a conflict. As well, such a model could provide any intervenor with new insights into disputants' behavior and a framework for analyzing and perhaps pre-empting behaviors that might derail success.

Second, we think *processes themselves* can be thought of and even organized according to developmental criteria. The conflict resolution movement has always voiced the conviction that it is in some way engaged in the process of changing and, perhaps, transforming people's lives. Engagement in conflict resolution processes has commonly been seen as an opportunity to become better, happier, and healed—in other words to grow (Baruch Bush and Folger, 1994; Williams, 1996). This sentiment is rooted in the fact that we see the central processes of the conflict resolution movement—in particular negotiation and mediation—as an advance and improvement over the conventional ways of doing things (which usually refers to adjudication). In other words, we have tended to view the conflict resolution processes as developmentally superior, somehow beyond traditional mindsets and practices.

In our approach to developmentalism, this intuition that certain processes are somehow inherently superior is not mere conjecture based upon anecdotal evidence. There is a logical conviction behind it. Processes are inherently relational—they are about social interaction and communication. The factor that most intimately affects and alters the relationships and interactions of individuals is human consciousness. How our awareness and understanding of our selves and others change as we pass through developmental stages alters our commitment and comfort with certain types of actions (i.e., processes) over others. In other words, based on our level of consciousness, we are more prone to accept or reject certain processes and the concomitant behaviors. The process itself is seen as reflecting, and indeed in many respects does reflect, the dimensions and attitudes of particular stages of growth.

Third, the relational dimension of human development that hinges upon changes in human consciousness invites speculation that analogizes development to the social level. This is by no means a return to traditional attempts to explain society in a deterministic way. In fact, we accept the core idea of the constructed nature of society, but the constructed society is also one that allows for imagining changed possibilities. This core idea is our central concern. Processes of conflict resolution and the conflict resolution movement have always been aligned with particular visions of a different social order—more peaceful, more

efficient, more united, more just. These various visions of society may be analogized to and mapped onto stages in the development of human consciousness. Thus, when we speak of the individual and processes as developmental, we are speaking of society as well.

Development, Worldviews, and Unity

Two issues related to developmental models are especially pertinent to an understanding of conflict resolution: the idea of worldview and the way those views understand the nature of conflict and its relationship to unity.

Worldview

Developmental models often posit that individuals mature and act according to particular worldviews at various stages of development. A worldview refers to the predominant lens through which we construct, interpret, and interact with all aspects of our reality. Worldviews are reflexive. They are shaped by our experience of reality, and at the same time they reshape and act upon that reality. Worldviews are dynamic. They are typically the subjective comprehensions of exposure to a wide variety of external explanations and understandings of the world. These external arguments about the nature of the world come from myriad forces, including parents, culture, and religion. Therefore, worldviews always have a distinct component—because they are shaped by our conceptions of our own experiences. However, they are also shared in a general sense, as the external forces are often overlapping and common in varying degrees.

General categories of shared worldviews can also be said to exist because human consciousness is the central factor that shapes both our worldview and the manner in which we engage and act as social beings. The human power of understanding—the main agent for the development of consciousness—involves cognitive, emotive, and experiential forms of learning and is responsive to the forces of both nature and nurture. Development of consciousness and worldview is an evolving process with certain distinct stages that can be simplistically plotted as infancy, childhood, adolescence, and maturity, but could be made more complex through adaptation of Erikson's eight stages or the application of any other such scheme. Worldview thus helps us to focus on the social and interactive dimensions of human development. Development of consciousness as expressed through our worldviews alters not only our selves but also the nature of all of our relationships. As our consciousness evolves and our worldviews develop, our social behaviors including the conflicts we are involved in, our approaches to conflict resolution, and the decision to be in conflict in the first place will all be potentially altered.

The relevance of worldviews for conflict resolution is seen in their impact on individual and group decision making. In any attempt at conflict resolution, individuals alone and with others make numerous decisions. Some of these are fundamental—Do I want to engage in this process? Do I agree with this proposed outcome?—while others are somewhat

less significant. However, any process of conflict resolution can be thought of as a matrix of large and small decisions being made, sometimes by individuals involved and sometimes collectively by everyone involved together.

Three components of worldviews shape our decisions—perspective, principles, and purpose. All human decisions are affected, framed, and in some senses determined by these three aspects.

Perspective is the world-constructing dimension of worldview. It is innate for human beings to attempt to order their experiences and observations of the world around them. This ordering is done at both the individual and communal levels, and typically manifests itself in a perception of how the world is organized (the descriptive perspective) and how it should be organized (the normative perspective). Perspectives affect decision making because we use them to set expectations for outcomes and to predict the decisions or interests of others. Simple examples illustrate the role of perspective in decision making. For example, decisions concerning our professional life will often be shaped by our constructed world. Is it a world of opportunity or deprivation? Is it a world of competition for scarce resources or of sharing and altruism? Or, more basically, is the world a friendly or hostile place?

Principles are the interactive component of worldview, the way in which the worldview is translated into concrete behaviors in life. In one sense, principles have historically been analyzed through discussions of morality and ethics, and refer to the values that guide our actions. Typically, as Carrie Menkel-Meadow (2001:1073–75) notes in the context of conflict resolution, such principles are given but may also be chosen through conversion or other means. This often compulsory nature of principles highlights the fact that individuals often see within their actions a moral imperative—a sense of rightness and correctness. We choose to act in certain ways because we see those actions as reflecting our particular and partial notion of the truth. Principles are thus sources of justification. They justify the particular decisions we make and the actions we undertake in the world—undergirding them with a degree of personal conviction.

Purpose is the interpretive component of worldview. Whereas our perspective is our understanding of how the world is ordered and our principles inform and shape our practices within that world, our purpose is what provides ultimate meaning to life, and, as such, dictates the ends we seek. Purpose acts like a funnel for all our decisions and actions, guiding them toward particular outcomes. There exists both a microcosmic and macrocosmic dimension to purpose. The microcosmic dimension is seen in how purpose shapes the particular results we seek in day-to-day activities, conflicts, and interactions. In the language of conflict resolution, it refers to both our positions and interests. The macrocosmic dimension lies in how purpose determines the plausible range of positions and interests we might contemplate pursuing in the first place. For example, consider a custody dispute between a divorcing couple. There are many potential outcomes that might be pursued. The contemplation of these outcomes is directed—interpreted—by the microcosmic dimension of purpose. The fact remains, however, that in any typical dispute certain rational outcomes are deemed wholly implausible or, more likely, never even contemplated. This narrowing of

the range of possibilities is accomplished by the macrocosmic dimensions of purpose. Whenever we refer to purpose later in this paper, we are referring first and foremost to the broader, more general macrocosmic dimension and its funneling effect on our decisions.

Breaking down worldviews into perspective, principles, and purpose is made clearer by looking at some of the worldviews, which, according to contemporary developmental psychology, are thought to be predominant. For example, one worldview is commonly labeled the 'mechanistic' worldview and is thought to have roots in Newtonian physics as well as empiricist philosophy (Miller, 2002: 14–15; Crombie, 1995: 149–50). The perspective of this view is that the "world is like a machine composed of parts that operate in time in space" (Miller, 2002: 14–15). The principles that operate in this mechanistic worldview are passivity and determinism; as in a machine, each part waits for the moment to be acted upon so that it can play its role. The purpose in this worldview is to remain within accepted bounds, to keep the machine running, and to fulfill one's narrow, predestined part.

The Unity Paradigm and the Nature of Conflict

The concept of worldview is also an invitation to imagine new possibilities. Not surprisingly, and with some justification, contemporary processes of conflict resolution are largely premised on the observation that conflict is a pervasive aspect of human life at all levels and in all contexts.

Conflict theory preaches the inevitability of inter-group competition. As Galtung and Jacobsen (2000: vii) comment, "Conflict, incompatible goals, are as human as life itself; the only conflict-free humans are dead humans" and that "war and violence are like slavery, colonialism, and patriarchy; however, they come and they go." This sentiment is typically accompanied by the view that conflict is desirable. "Conflict is the spice that seasons our most intimate relationships," and "it is woven into the fundamental fabric of nature" (Muldoon, 1996: 9). Conflict has numerous positive life-affirming effects—it can strengthen group identity, bring issues and problems to the surface, and encourage positive action. These beliefs about conflict typically show fidelity to the idea that there are basic human needs that require satisfaction, and attempts at needs satisfaction often give rise to conflict. The work of Abraham H. Maslow is a good example. They also sometimes imply Freud's assertions that the only hope for a reduction of war is in the displacement of instinctual aims and impulses (Einstein and Freud, 1991). There is a symmetry between inner and outer conflict in this scheme. Internal dissonance is said to give rise to behaviors likely to result in social conflict. Alleviating social conflicts is thus also an attempt to reestablish inner peace and harmony.

Assumptions and observations about the pervasiveness and positive nature of conflict do not, as a matter of logic, establish the inevitability of conflict. Nor do they necessarily negate the possibility of creating environments where the incidence of conflict is minimal. In a developmental perspective, conflict is a matter of lesser and greater degree. When operating according to certain worldviews, individuals and social groups will be more prone

to conflict. In some circumstances conflict can be said to be inevitable. However, when operating according to other worldviews, it is at least possible that we can think of conflict as in some ways not inevitable. Attempting to look at the phenomena of conflict in such a reverse manner, by imagining a zone that is ‘conflict-free’, may thus be a helpful exercise in exploring new approaches and understandings to conflict resolution.

Imagine for a moment a social condition free of conflict. What would we call it? Our choice of term would be largely dictated by our orientation to the nature of conflict itself. As we have already seen, for some, conflict-free is equated with a state of death or nothingness. The problem with such a view is that it imposes a hegemonic view of conflict—that conflict is a fundamental life-sustaining reality which has distinct properties of existence unique unto itself. Why do we often assume that the absence of conflict is a void, an end? If this were so, then a term such as ‘conflict resolution’ would be inappropriate on multiple levels; for, if a conflict-free situation is one of death, then resolution is not a desirable goal. As well, resolution is much closer to being an impossibility; for, in this life-sustaining view of conflict are we not likely to seek out conflicts in order to maintain existence?

One counter-orientation, which we advocate both as a matter of theory and practice, is to begin thinking about conflict as the absence of a condition of unity. A conflict-free situation is, as such, not a void, but a substantive condition constructed around an alternate life-sustaining force. Unity is a difficult term for many people, and it has not been well studied. In popular usage it tends to carry connotations of uniformity, coercion, and imposition. In various philosophical traditions the term does appear, but often carrying narrower or more specific connotations than as a fundamental life-force. One common application and appearance of unity is in dialectical theories, such as the Hegelian dialectic, which is rooted in the idea of the synthesis of opposites. Various religious traditions have spoken of both transcendent unity (for example, with reference to God) and social unity, but often have maintained severe forms of exclusion. For example, the Prophet Muhammad confronted the entrenched tribalism of 7th-century Arabia by placing the *umma* (“community” or “people”) at the center of his religious system, a concept with the potential to transcend narrower loyalties to tribe and to even larger social units such as nation. Membership in the *umma*, however, is restricted to believers and thus remains only a limited unity.⁴ In the last decade, processes of globalization have advanced our awareness of evolving forms of unity—be they economic, military, political, or informational—yet, the term and concept of unity remain largely underused.

⁴ This is not intended to be a critique of the concept of *umma*, which is a powerful unifying idea within Muslim traditions. Most religious systems have tended to employ limited conceptions of unity in various guises. Within some Christian traditions, the notion of communion and the collective approach to God within a Church is a similarly powerful, yet socially limited, concept of unity. Some more recent religions as well as movements within older religions have attempted to give unity a more universal and central definition. The Bahá’í Faith is a good example of a new religion rooted in a concept of the “oneness of humanity” (Martin and Hatcher, 1984). Unitarian Universalism and the ecumenical movement are good examples from within Christianity.

There are two aspects to our use of the term ‘unity’ for the purposes of this paper. First, inner psychological unity and outer social unity must be intended. Unity cannot be achieved without a conscious and purposeful ambition to unite. The central reason for this requisite is the intimate relationship between unity and power. It is extremely easy to confuse situations of oppression and distortion with a condition of unity. ‘Forced unity’ is in fact one of the most common patterns in human relationships and societies—a condition where a sense of cohesion is maintained through an external threat and force. A striking example is observed in our work in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where we have used Conflict-Free Conflict Resolution (CFCR) as a peace-education model for high school children from all ethnic groups. A common plea we heard was for a return to the Cold War political arrangement of being a Soviet satellite state, as the best alternative to current tensions. “During that period,” we were told, “we were united. The ethnic groups had no problem with one another. We never fought.” Our response usually began with a question: “When the Cold War government fell, why was there a return to pre-Communist ethnic patterns and fighting? What type of unity was present?” Forced unity is only the illusion of unity. In reality, it is a condition patterned on force and fear in which only superficial unity is created, while within individual minds and social patterns, preexisting conflicts remain.

Second, unity is a state of convergence of different and unique entities. A meaningful distinction between unity and uniformity is only made by recognizing that unity implies differentiated entities coming into contact to form another, usually more complex, distinct entity. In human relationships this element of difference is always present. We each bring into our relationships wide varieties of experience and culture.

There are different psychological and social patterns this meeting of difference can display. One of the individuals involved can occupy a position of dominance, and that individual’s worldview and way of life will come to dominate the relationship, and in some instances, the life of the other individuals involved. This pattern often has the semblance of unity, as it appears that the individuals involved are in a state of harmony and healthy integration. In reality though no unity has been created, but rather a state of uniformity imposed. A second common pattern is that the individuals involved in the relationship largely maintain the autonomy and sovereignty of their preexisting worldviews and way of life, and treat others as equal in the relationship. This pattern again has the semblance of unity, but is actually only one of symmetry. No convergence or integration has taken place; people lead parallel lives. A third pattern often associated with the term ‘unity’ exists when the two individuals create a new entity that as much as possible represents the equal contributions of the individuals and reflects a harmony between their worldviews and ways of life.

Combining these elements, our definition states *unity is a conscious and purposeful condition of convergence of two or more unique entities in a state of harmony, integration, and cooperation to create a new evolving entity or entities, usually, of a same or a higher nature*. However, any definition of unity is incomplete without observing how unity relates to our general life processes. The stress on unity in the first instance as a chosen, conscious, and internal condition suggests unity is a creative process that is life engendering. Creating

unity is a process of creating new entities and life patterns. Focusing our minds on unity, therefore, may effectively forestall the appearance or intensification of conditions of severe conflict or disunity. By fostering creativity and life, unity prevents or at least lessens the appearance of conflict. The argument stemming from this idea is that the abundance of conflict in human life may be due to the absence of unity and not due to an inherent proclivity of human beings for conflict and violence. Accordingly, the possibility opens to define conflict as the absence of unity, and disunity as the source and cause of conflict.

For conflict resolution, the implications of this understanding of unity are potentially far reaching. First, it is helpful simply as a mental map. Approaching a situation of conflict from a worldview that preaches the inevitability of conflict potentially results in different behavior than if we approach from an understanding of the possibility of unity. How we understand the dimensions of time involved in the resolution of conflict, the ways in which we use space, the intended outcomes, and the role an intervenor might play could all radically change. Arguably, current disensus over mediator styles reflects a similar intuition. In a variety of critiques of problem-solving mediation, the sense is that mediation sells short the possibilities of intervention, giving too much power to the conflict and not enough power to the reality of enduring peaceful human relationships. A focus on unity similarly inverts an intervenor's focus: Unity is possible, is real, and a narrowing of a conflict to a dispute should actually be countered with a broadening of one's understanding of conflict as an opportunity to create, or perhaps re-create, a strong and substantive condition of unity.

Second, the idea of unity invites a critique of contemporary processes and principles of conflict resolution. Simply stated, processes such as mediation and negotiation assume too much about the pervasiveness and inevitability of conflict and too little about the capacity of human beings to craft new relationships and community models. Most models of mediation, for example, are not even remotely concerned with the possibilities of creating unity. In their very core structures they reflect a perception of division. They speak of disputants and parties, often involve problematic techniques of separation such as caucusing, and in some models engage in an intense narrowing of the issues so as to avoid the psychological and human dimensions, focusing instead on the technical and manageable. Thinking about unity thus invites critiques of entire process models themselves. While this may be a difficult challenge, it could be beneficial to engage in such a structured re-examination of fundamentals.

Third, the association between worldview, unity, and conflict—that some worldviews may be more conducive to conflict and others to unity, and that these may be said to exist on a developmental axis—highlights the intersection of process and education. Meaningful and effective conflict resolution in this view requires developing an understanding of participants' worldviews and education about worldviews that might result in the most successful resolution of the conflict or the creation of the highest state of unity. As well, this view highlights that the traditional understanding of the source of conflict in conflict resolution literature—which usually frames conflict as a result of competition over goals—may be deficient and that an underlying conflict may often exist between worldviews.

In this understanding effective resolution must involve helping individuals reflect upon and become more conscious of their worldviews and the role worldviews play in life, and challenging individuals to confront their worldviews so as to resolve the conflict before them and perhaps proactively forestall future conflicts.

Putting It All Together: A Nascent Developmental Model of Conflict Resolution

The premises underlying our developmental model of conflict resolution should now be clear: People approach conflict and conflict resolution differently depending upon their stage of development. Specifically, their worldview—made up of their perspectives, principles, and purposes—will shape the conflicts people experience, their behavior in such situations, and their attempts at resolution. Processes themselves will also tend to reflect particular worldviews more than others. Developmentalism also opens the door to the possibility that some worldviews may be more conducive to conflict and others to unity. The challenge within this approach is to understand which processes and behaviors are likely to engender unity.

Against this backdrop we have developed and utilized a nascent developmental model of conflict resolution. The model is designed more with an eye to practice than to theory, and as such it may at first appear linear, straightforward, and rigid. However, we caution against such conclusions. What is described below is an umbrella model, which is stated in general terms because it encompasses a set of core ideas that have been altered and applied to a range of more specific activities related to the practice of conflict resolution. We have developed more specific applications of the umbrella model in several areas, including institutional conflict resolution, creating environments that are ‘conflict-free’, peace education programs and qualities of effective leadership and management practices. The umbrella model we describe below is a broad framework from which more specific applications can be derived.

Step one is to describe the worldviews that correspond to major stages in human development. Table 1 identifies four major stages in human development—infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood—and their corresponding worldviews.

Within these levels one finds many common themes from the literature on human development. The worldview of infancy is distinguished from the later worldviews by the fact that the human being in infancy is unable to differentiate between the self and others, a trait that is generally accepted as typical of the human infant. Similarly, the plotting of a heightened tendency toward competition and conflict at the stage of adolescence reflects a typical description of that phase of human life. As well, the expansion of purpose to be all-encompassing reflects cognitive developments in our ways of understanding and relating to the world.

The basic directions in which perspective, principles, and purpose develop are obvious. The development of perspective is from an undifferentiated and self-consumed understanding of the world to an all-encompassing and inclusive one. This erosion of

dichotomous perceptions fuels the potential to recognize the indivisibility of one's choices and actions from the surrounding world. Similarly, the development of principles is toward increasingly other-centered or altruistic behavior (broken down into the ideas of truth and justice in Table 1) and a lessening of the tendency toward either authoritarianism (childhood) or competition (adolescence). Finally, the development of macrocosmic purpose is in the direction of expansion outwards from the self, to the point where unity itself becomes a desired outcome.

Decision Making	Stage of Development	Perspective	Principles	Purpose
Level 1	Infancy	World is... Me	Self-interest	Instinctual Self-Preservation
Level 2	Childhood	World is... Dangerous	Might is Right/Domination	Conscious Self-/Group Preservation
Level 3	Adolescence	World is... Jungle	Survival of the Fittest/ Competition	To "Win"
Level 4	Adulthood	World is... One	Truth and Justice	Unity in Diversity

Table 1. The Developmental Stages of Decision Making

The initial relevance for conflict resolution is that whenever individuals sit down to resolve a conflict, they bring to the table a predominant worldview that will generally correspond to one of the four developmental levels. Just as people bring to the resolution table their positions and interests, they also bring with them the perspective, principles, and purpose that are informing and shaping those positions and interests, as well as their behavior. The developmental model thus provides a useful tool for analyzing and responding to disputant behavior. Anecdotes from a training and from an intervention help illustrate this.

When training people in CFCR, after presenting the four worldviews, we often ask them at what level of decision making they think they are. Typically, the answers given are judgmental and self-delusional, such as the oft-repeated comment, "I know a lot of people who operate at the childhood and adolescent levels, but I'm glad to be at Level 4." One interesting exchange occurred during a graduate seminar in conflict resolution.⁵ After being presented with the four levels of decision making, John, one of the group members,

⁵ The recounted events occurred in the graduate seminar "Conflict-Free Conflict Resolution" taught by the authors at Landegg International University in June 2000. The names of the participants have been changed, as is the case throughout this article.

suggested the group operated according to Level 4, but that he had worked with many who were “at Level 3.” At one point another class member, Jane, raised the issue of a particularly difficult set of political negotiations in which she had been involved outside of the class. John made the following comment in reply—“I assume everyone involved in the discussions was operating in a pure Level 3 mode.”

Within this exchange we can observe the drawbacks and utility of a developmental model of conflict resolution. Developmental analogies are often accompanied by misplaced implications of “better” or “superior.” In reality, by referring to developmental stages, one should see connotations of cause and effect. Earlier stages cannot and should not be avoided or skipped. They are the building blocks of later ones and are fundamental for their attainment. However, it may be psychologically unhealthy to be in a particular stage of development for too long or at a particular period of life. It is not always appropriate to be primarily driven by the worldview of a child, but that is not because of an innate problem with the worldview itself. Only in the context of time and space may worldviews be deemed appropriate or inappropriate, healthy or unhealthy. In their essence they are always needed and fundamental to human life and growth.

This danger aside, the anecdote reveals an important human impulse that lies at the root of all conflict resolution. Human beings want to be successful and be seen as successful; they want to do their best and be associated in other people’s minds as the best. Humans innately strive to be better, to improve, and to be affirmed in their improvement. John was both trying to associate himself with Level 4 and operating on the assumption that other individuals wanted to be at Level 4. Humans exposed to a developmental model, if it seems to resonate with their experience of being human, are driven to try to fulfill it. Our experience has been that the mere activity of trying to organize conflict resolution methods and processes developmentally for disputants has the effect of propelling them to try to utilize processes that are more likely to result in peaceful, longstanding resolution—whether it is mediation over the courts, the courts over violence, or an attempt to create unity as opposed to just reaching an amicable outcome.

The second anecdote is the unfortunately familiar situation of an intervention between a divorcing couple in order to achieve a financial settlement. Throughout the attempted intervention Frank, the husband, exhibited the following behaviors: initially refused to take part; later agreed to take part but tried to set conditions and terms on his participation; tried to commandeer the process from the outset by demanding to make the first opening statement; either failed to listen when others were speaking or attempted to interrupt and challenge noisily; and tried to belittle the mediator on a number of occasions. Based on the developmental model, Frank was exhibiting behaviors typical of a predominant childhood worldview. His tendency toward control and authoritarianism resonated with the insecurities and fear typical of that stage of development. The tools a mediator typically has at his or her disposal to deal with this situation—caucusing, time-outs, more evaluative tools—while often helpful, nonetheless avoid addressing the real motivations that are prompting Frank’s behavior and making the process difficult. If a resolution is reached under such conditions,

there are nagging dilemmas that remain—have we just reinforced Frank’s aggressive authoritarian tendencies? Were the outcomes skewed to meet the demands of Frank’s behavior? Won’t Frank, given his worldview, be engaged in new, and perhaps related, conflicts that require intervention very soon? By contrast, the developmental model potentially offers a whole other set of techniques and approaches to this situation. At the very least a structured scheme to diagnose Frank’s behavior is provided. This model opens the door to techniques including worldview education and challenging participants to engage in Level 4 conflict resolution that can be used in a way that may be proactive and lead to long-term resolutions and results.

However, our argument goes even further. Step two in the developmental model of conflict resolution involves recognizing that someone with a particular worldview will correspondingly tend to try to resolve conflict in particular way (the nature of conflict resolution) employing a particular modality (the mode of conflict resolution). Moreover, it is even possible to speculate how particular contemporary processes might reflect a particular level as opposed to others. The nature of conflict resolution is that it can be survival based, force based, power based, or unity based. We have labeled the modes of conflict resolution as the Self-Centered Mode (S-Mode), the Authoritarian Mode (A-Mode), the Power Struggle Mode (P-Mode), and the Consultative Mode (C-Mode). Table 2 summarizes the nature and modes of conflict resolution.

Decision Making	Stage of Development	Nature of Conflict Resolution	Mode of Conflict Resolution
Level 1	Infancy	Survival Based	Self-Centered (S-Mode)
Level 2	Childhood	Force Based	Authoritarian (A-Mode)
Level 3	Adolescence	Power Based	Power Struggle (P-Mode)
Level 4	Adulthood	Unity Based	Consultative (C-Mode)

Table 2. The Developmental Modes of Conflict Resolution

When an individual or group attempts to resolve a conflict in the S-Mode, their sole objective is to fulfill self-centered needs apart from any awareness or concern for the needs, interests, and issues that the other parties to the conflict face. These self-centered needs have their roots in the extreme vulnerability and dependency of those involved. The S-Mode is not just that a person or a group is “looking out for their own interests” or “taking care of number one first,” but that they are actually oblivious to the harmful effects on other people of their pursuit of self-interest. Usually, we do not find many examples of pure S-Mode behavior. Self-interest is also present in the A-Mode and P-Mode, but individuals functioning in those two modes are more conscious of its presence. The A-Mode of conflict resolution is associated most intimately with physical and psychological forces as tools for resolving conflicts. Underlying the worldview of childhood is a profound sense of insecurity, and by consequence A-Mode conflict resolution often has the disjointed appearance of mediating between moments of force and moments of strained calm. The moments of calm, just like the moments of force, serve to reinforce the power position of the authority figure by alleviating his or her insecurity.

The association of the A-Mode with force, which often translates into violence, arguably means there are significant remnants of the A-Mode in contemporary peaceful processes. For example, one central critique of adversarial adjudicative processes that contributed to the rise in popularity of mediation was that mediation allowed for a shift in decision making authority away from legal actors to the disputants themselves. The movement away from imposed resolutions to chosen ones perhaps represents a struggle with the A-Mode and force-based conflict resolution within an otherwise nonviolent process.

The P-Mode corresponds to the adolescent worldview that is characterized by an internal struggle of identity formation and an external competition for autonomy and independence. Such a worldview invites competition and a power struggle with those around them, but rarely descends into physical confrontation. Conflict resolution processes that stress winning and positioning seem to fit comfortably with this worldview, as would many aspects of traditional adversarial legal cultures. At the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution held in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1999, we presented the developmental model of conflict resolution to a group of experienced mediators and negotiators. With almost no dissent they agreed on two things. First, and unsurprisingly, they unanimously agreed that when they are engaged in mediation and negotiation, the majority of the parties—whether there are lawyers present or not—behave in the P-Mode. Those who did not behave in the P-Mode were often described as being in the A-Mode. Second, and very surprising, is that they all agreed that mediation and negotiation were both processes that are designed in accordance with a P-Mode mentality. Without exception mediation and negotiation were termed adolescent processes of conflict resolution. When we challenged them on this classification, they stated that while there are elements within certain forms of negotiation and mediation that perhaps transcend the adolescent mindset (transformative mediation was often mentioned), the processes themselves are adolescent. Many issues were mentioned as evidence for this opinion. Mediation’s focus on party autonomy and mediator

neutrality—while important improvements over some of the authoritarian tendency of adjudication—nonetheless embody ideals of open competition and the importance of winning. Also, many expressed dissatisfaction with mediation’s inability to be structured in a manner that is other than the divisive party/party mentality that suffuses almost all conflict resolution processes. This issue speaks to a general concern over whether we have to view conflict resolution in an “us versus them” and “either-or” mentality. In other words, when there is a conflict, inevitably it is required that we analyze the conflict as a point of contention between competing parties with different interests who need to resolve the specific issue before them. Even further, popular rhetoric such as “win/win” outcomes were interpreted by the group of conflict resolution practitioners as embodying the adolescent attitude that the purpose of conflict resolution is to fulfill one’s desired end(s) as fully as possible, ideally with the least amount of difficulty or resistance.

The C-Mode of conflict resolution is, we find, largely unexplored and where the future of the field of conflict resolution lies. Globalization and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon necessitate meaningful engagement in a dialogue and the study of unity. It resonates with the times and age we live in that our focus move toward building sustained relationships and seeking proactive resolutions as opposed to less ambitious and more temporary outcomes. The idea of a consultative modality is one in which participants are all challenged and consciously agree to attempt to approach resolving their conflict in the worldview of maturity. In practical terms this means a complete revisioning of the practice of conflict resolution, including moving beyond a rhetoric of division (parties and disputants), focusing on the educative dimensions of process, and encouraging a fidelity to a higher state of unity as part of the outcome.

Toward the C-Mode: CFCR and New Processes

This preliminary attempt to articulate a developmental model of conflict resolution provides a good starting point for further research. Our continuing work focuses on a number of challenging issues raised by the developmental model, including further theorizing about the nature of unity, expounding on the application of developmentalism to social processes such as conflict resolution, and exploring the relationship between unity and peace.

The greatest benefit of the developmental model, thus far, has been the challenges it has laid before us for the practice of conflict resolution. By looking at contemporary processes through a developmental lens, a door has been opened to experimentation with or reform of these processes, as well as to critical new approaches that might reflect more of the possibilities of unity and the C-Mode.

For us, this experimentation has resulted in the development of a new process, CFCR, as well as some alterations to our own practices of mediation. CFCR has been used to train managers in several corporations, been used as a basis for experimentation with proactive

and preventive marriage and family conflict resolution, and has been introduced to judges, lawyers, psychologists, schoolchildren, and graduate students of conflict resolution in North America and Europe. Additionally, in 1999, Landegg International University was invited by the Minister of Education for Bosnia and Herzegovina to introduce its Education for Peace (EFP) Program to elementary and secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This program promotes the development of interethnic understanding and harmony, as well as conflict-free and violence-free processes of decision making, and addresses the need for community-level healing from the effects of post-war trauma. The EFP Program is based on the concept of CFCR and is aimed at creating a culture of peace in schools. Following agreement between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska Ministers of Education, and with the support of the Office of the High Representative, a pilot phase of the EFP Program was introduced in September 2000 to six schools (three elementary and three secondary), representing the three previously warring ethnic communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Bosniak, Croat, and Serb). During the pilot year, which was financed by the Government of Luxembourg, the concepts of Education for Peace were integrated into every classroom and subject for the whole academic year, and involved a total of 400 teachers and administrators, 6,000 students, and 10,000 parents and family members. The results of this broad and intensive application of the concepts of EFP and CFCR within these schools are the focus of forthcoming articles. Future articles and research will describe the evolution and practice of CFCR, and evaluate its potential for widespread use.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Kimberly Syphrett for her research assistance. Christine Zerbinis for her editorial work, and Kathryn Khamsi for her assistance with the tables.

References

- Baruch Bush, Robert A., and Joseph P. Folger. 1994. *The Promise of Mediation: Responding to Conflict through Empowerment and Recognition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Crombie, A.C. 1995. *The History of Science from Augustine to Galileo: Science in the Middle Ages*. (Vol. 1.) New York: Dover.
- Currie, Cris M. 1998. "Opinion Wanted: A Theoretical Construct for Mediation Practice." *Dispute Resolution Journal*, Vol. 53, August, pp. 70–75.
- Danesh, Hossain B. 1995. *The Violence-Free Family: Building Block of a Peaceful Civilization*. Ottawa: Bahá'í Studies Publications.
- . 1986. *Unity: The Creative Foundation of Peace*. Ottawa: Bahá'í Studies Publications.
- Durkin, Kevin. 1995. *Developmental Psychology: Infancy to Old Age*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Einstein, Albert, and Sigmund Freud. 1991. *Why War?* Redding: CAT Publishing.
- Galtung, Johan, and Carl G. Jacobsen. 2000. *Searching for Peace: The Road to TRANSFEND*. London: Pluto Press.
- Goldberg, Steven H. 1997. "'Wait a Minute. This is Where I Came In.' A Trial Lawyer's Search for Alternative Dispute Resolution." *Brigham Young University Law Review*, Vol. 1997, pp. 653–685.
- Lewis, Bernard. 1988. *The Political Language of Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Martin, Douglas, and William S. Hatcher. 1984. *The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Menkel-Meadow, Carrie. 2001. "And Now a Word About Secular Humanism, Spirituality, and the Practice of Justice and Conflict Resolution." *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, Vol. 28, April, pp. 1073–1087.
- . 1997. "When Dispute Resolution Begets Disputes of its Own: Conflicts Among Dispute Professionals." *University of California at Los Angeles Law Review*, Vol. 44, August, pp. 1871–1933.
- Miller, Patricia H. 2002. *Theories of Developmental Psychology*. New York: Worth.
- Mindell, Arnold. 1993. *The Leader as Martial Artist*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Muldoon, Brian. 1996. *The Heart of Conflict*. New York: Perigee.
- Williams, Gerald R. 1996. "Negotiation as a Healing Process." *Journal of Dispute Resolution*, Vol. 1996, No. 1, pp. 1–66.