The Self in Conflict: The Evolution of Mediation

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Developmentalists such as Baldwin (1975); Basseches (1984); Cook-Greuter (1990, 1999, 2000); Kegan (1982, 1994, 2001); Loevinger (1976, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1997, 1998, 2002); Piaget (1970); and Wade (1996) have devoted their research to the growth of different lines of development in individuals. A developmental understanding of conflict has implications for conflict theorists and interveners. In applying Kegan's staged model of adult psychological development to the experience of conflict, we can better understand the meaning-making that underlies the behaviors that disputants exhibit in conflict, thereby allowing interveners to help the disputants expand their understanding of the conflict situation and find new pathways to its resolution.

> Conflict is a challenge to our pretense of completeness.
>
> *Kegan, In over Our Heads: The*
> *Mental Demands of Modern Life*

More than a decade ago, Bush and Folger (1994) noted that mediation has received considerable attention by practitioners and scholars working within the conflict resolution field. Although mediation may be easy to define, many in the field believe that its true potential remains unrealized. The significant debate that Bush and Folger initiated still continues concerning whether or not mediation is primarily a functional, settlement-driven process or one that emphasizes relational development and has transformational potential. Transformational mediation involves a conviction that disputing parties, while struggling with their passions and

divisions, can achieve moral and ethical growth as a consequence of the potential for empowerment and recognition that conflict contains.

In their seminal work, *The Promise of Mediation*: *Responding to Conflict through Empowerment and Recognition* (1994), Bush and Folger characterize their approach as riding the twin steeds of empowerment and recognition, promoting the notion that mediation has the potential to do far more than make agreements and improve relationships; it has the potential to transform people's lives, even if no substantive agreement to the conflict is reached. Although more than a decade old, their ideas remain fresh and provocative, continuing to challenge our thinking about both the function and meaning of mediation.

This article seeks to continue this vital discussion from a different perspective, one that shares a commitment to the transformational dimensions of mediation. It examines the process from the viewpoint of constructive-developmental theory (Kegan and others, 2001; Kegan, 1982, 1994) and situates the mediation experience and the meaning-making it entails within a model of evolving mental complexity. Kegan's constructive developmental approach strengthens the notion put forth by Bush and Folger (1994, 2005) that conflict is potentially transformational.

Our intention in this article is twofold: to introduce the notion that conflict is a constructed experience for each person involved, rather than a straightforward description of a circumstance that is happening "out there" (Kegan, 1994), and to suggest that the individual's construction of the conflict experience follows a predictable and measurable trajectory of increasing complexity.

Conflict Through a Constructive-Developmental Lens

> A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid the threat of chaos.... As there are no fixed truths or totally definitive knowledge, and because circumstances change, the human condition may be best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings.
>
> *J. Mezirow and Associates,*
> *Learning as Transformation:*
> *Critical Perspectives on a*
> *Theory in Progress*

A developmental approach to understanding conflict and "negotiating contested meanings" suggests that there are qualitatively different ways of constructing meaning in a conflict and therefore qualitatively different ways of responding, mediating, and resolving a conflict. As all mediators know, the disputants come to mediation with a stunningly diverse array of issues, meanings, experiences, and expectations. As mediators talking with different disputants in the same conflict, we often wonder whether these disputants are actually describing the same conflict! A brief overview of constructive-developmental theory will illuminate and clarify this often puzzling phenomenon, and we will suggest ways in which an understanding of this theory can, in fact, transform both the mediator's and the disputants' understanding of conflict in general and the disputants' own conflicts in particular.

Constructive-developmental theory (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Popp and Portnow, 2001) brings together two potent lines of human development: *constructivism,* the notion that people construct their reality through their engagement with their social and environmental surround—that is, that they create meaning from their experience; and *developmentalism,* the notion that individuals' actual process of constructing meaning evolves through qualitatively different stages of increasing complexity. Both perspectives can be applied to the mediation process to illuminate how the disputants and the mediator construct meaning in a conflict.

This remarkable vision of human development drew on its roots in biological science to conceive an open-system model that places life within its surrounding energy field, a dynamic environment with which we seek to maintain equilibrium. One major feature of this concept is that rather than locating the energy system solely within the individual, pointing to our need only to maintain an internal balance, it emphasizes our ongoing engagement with the world around us (Kegan, 1982). This notion is consistent with Maturana and Varela's introduction of autopoiesis (1972), a self-regulating system or process through which living organisms inevitably and constantly create and recreate themselves in their ongoing engagement with a changing external environment, a process that ensures the maintenance of identity, as in the development of a child into an adult (Combs, 1996). The ongoing process of the construction of meaning is this autopoietic process exactly: the increasing complexity of the meaning we make in and of our lives is inextricably linked with our engagement in our social and environmental surround.

Kegan (1982, 1994) suggests that meaning-making is an essential human activity, the primary motion of our human being that cannot be

separated from our cultural, social, and physical experiences. "It is not that a person makes meaning, as much as that the activity of being a person is the activity of meaning-making. There is thus no feeling, no experience, no thought, no perception independent of a meaning-making context in which it *becomes* a feeling, an experience, a thought, a perception, because we *are* the meaning-making context" (Kegan, 1982, p. 11). If we do not or cannot make meaning, we are alone, isolated from the world around us, bereft and unrecognized. We create meaning in order to survive—physical survival for the infant and psychological survival for the adult (Kegan, 1982). When the meaning we create is not understood, valued, or respected by others, it threatens our sense of wholeness. Self-protection is a natural defense, often resulting in conflict.

The unique contribution of Kegan's theory, in addition to its explicit depiction of a developmental trajectory of adult growth, is the assertion that the very process of constructing reality, of making and interpreting meaning, is the master motion of personality, the fundamental activity of being human. This framework of adult development, then, is a theory of consciousness development, in which development is the process of making increasingly complex meaning of an increasingly complex world (Popp and Portnow, 2001). It is this gradual evolution of the meaning-making process that gives shape and coherence to our human experience and understanding of life in general and conflict in particular. Kegan (1994) talks about the notion of *knowing:* "By now it should be clear that when I refer to 'mind' or 'mental' or 'knowing' I am not referring to thinking processes alone. . . . This kind of 'knowing,' this work of the mind, is not about 'cognition' alone, if what we mean by cognition is thinking divorced from feelings and social relating. It is about the organizing principle we bring to our thinking and our feelings and our relating to others and our relating to parts of ourselves" (p. 29).

Affirming that knowing is more than just reasoning ability, Inglis and Steele (2005) link up knowing with *complexity intelligence*—the integration of reasoning ability, emotional capacity, and social cognition, which are all related to the individual's ability to respond to the demands and expectations that a particular environment places on him or her. Conflict is a particularly challenging "environment," and as we will illustrate, there are many different levels of complexity both in the way one understands conflict and the way one responds to it.

One of the principal assumptions of the conflict field is that each disputant has equal capacity to separate the people from the problem once

they have all heard each other's perspective. Within this assumption lies another assumption: that each of the disputants has the capacity to take the perspective of the other, momentarily setting aside their own. We challenge those assumptions in the next section, taking an in-depth look at the complexity and perspective-taking capacity of each mindset, thereby posing the questions: Does each disputant in fact have the capacity to take others' perspectives and set aside his or her own? If not, how can mediation work if not every disputant does have the capacity to take another's perspective? How do we bridge the gap? We ask the reader to keep these questions in mind while reading the following section.

Mindsets in Conflict

Kegan (1982) has described a developmental continuum along which he has identified six primary stages of development, which we refer to as mindsets, with four transitional subphases between each mindset. The process of evolution from one mindset to the next is, Kegan says, "not [just] a matter of increasing differentiation alone, but of increasing relationship to the world. These 'increases' are qualitative and they involve, first of all, a better recognition of what is separate from me so that *I can be related to it, rather than fused with it*" (p. 68; emphasis added). We will describe here only the three primary mindsets that are observable in adulthood. In any given complex conflict, it is highly probable that each of these mindsets will be represented by one or more of the disputants. Space constraints prevent us from describing the transitions between the mindsets, but we refer the reader to Kegan (1982, 1994), Popp and Portnow (2001) and McGuigan (2006) for more in-depth discussion and review of all the mindsets and the transitions between them.

The first mindset along the continuum that we encounter in adulthood is the *instrumental mindset.* A person with this mindset can be recognized from her concrete orientation to the world, her inability to think abstractly, and her preoccupation with satisfying her own concrete needs. In this mindset, I cannot imagine your interior or emotional self and I cannot look at things from your perspective, thus I am sensitive only to how you react and behave and what the concrete impact is on me—whether I get what I want from you or not. If you can help me satisfy my needs, you are a valuable person to me. If you do not or cannot help me get my needs met, I see no reason to have a relationship with you. I understand my world through the concrete consequences of your and my actions. I can

take your perspective only to the extent that I can predict your actions and how they will concretely affect me.

Here is a description from Bill who has an instrumental mindset of his reasons for wanting his children to do better than he has done in his life:

> I quit school. I hung around; I joined gangs. It's the pits, you know. I mean, at the time I thought it was the best thing in the world, to hang around the corner . . . and you know, just party all the time and stuff. But the party ended, you know. And all the sudden, I'm old and—I'm older, and you know, I'm still stuck in a job that—you know. I mean, I bought a house and everything, but I could have done a lot better . . . and I know [my kids] can. The values are, I want them (his children) to do better . . . As I said, my mother and father got divorced, and I went through some bad times with them fighting and stuff, but if my wife ever leaves me, I'm gonna have to pay alimony for five kids, and I don't want to do that. So, it's important to keep everybody happy. (laughs) No. Yeah. I don't know how I got the values. I just want 'em to do good, and you know, I don't want 'em to be a bunch of losers, you know [Drago-Severson, 2001, p. 504].

Bill's concerns are put in very concrete terms: if his wife ever leaves him, he'll have to pay all that alimony; that becomes the reason to "keep everybody happy" and not in conflict.

In conflict situations, those with the instrumental mindset tend to focus on the most obvious and concrete effects of, and reasons for, the dispute; they are unable to see or appreciate the underlying abstract issues involved for the other disputants. Someone with this mindset can see the consequences of their own actions, anticipate the reactions of others, make plans, and understand the rules, yet they have great difficulty standing in the other's shoes and cannot see that their own actions might be part of the problem. A person with an instrumental mindset can recognize and acknowledge that others have a different perspective from his or her own. However, he cannot "try on" that perspective; he can only understand the other's perspective in opposition to his own: one of them has to be right and the other has to be wrong. There is no middle ground. The world of a person with this mindset is understood through dualities. Hence, the organizing principle for the instrumental mindset might be the question, "What do I have to do to get what I want?"

Practitioner Tip

In working with disputants who create meaning as Bill does, the mediator should craft interventions that encourage the disputants to begin to empathize and "take in" the perspective of the other, to begin to try to imagine the other's experience as different from their own.

The next mindset on the continuum is the *affiliative mindset.* There is a new capacity with this mindset not only to recognize another's perspective, but actually to bring that perspective in and embody it. A person with this mindset could be described as being oriented toward and defined by the relational or social context. One might recognize a person with the affiliative mindset as being very focused on and concerned about how others view him or her, very concerned about not wanting to upset or offend or alienate anyone. This concern is part of the new capacity to take the other's perspective, to feel what the other is feeling—in fact, to feel *the same as* the other person. With this mindset, I not only take your perspective, I *take on* your perspective. Thus, this person identifies with the group to which he belongs; the group identity and perspective tells him who he is.

An orientation toward mutuality and loyalty also distinguishes the affiliative mindset. To be in a good relationship with one another, we must both think alike, "stay true to each other," feel the same about things, believe in the same things. A person with this mindset also experiences a strong sense of responsibility for other people's feelings or experience and holds others responsible for his or her feelings as well—"she made me feel that way," or "I feel so guilty when I make him upset."

For someone with an affiliative mindset, conflict is a particularly stressful thing, signifying a rift in a relationship, a breach in the mutuality, trust, and loyalty. The experience of conflict is one of deep distress, feeling as if one's very self is being pulled apart, which, on a psychological level, it is. Psychologically, a person with an affiliative mindset is made up by his or her relationships with others. If the other pulls away in conflict, it feels as though I am being pulled apart, left with an untenable, gaping hole in my sense of who I am.

About being in the middle of a conflict, Sarah says,

I need to let someone know how I feel, I need to get it straight—okay, we've talked and that's it. Fine. We're still not going to be friends, fine. But I need to get it straight. (The interviewer asks, "What if they don't get it?") I'll sit there and I'll try to explain to them till I'm blue. I know

that's stupid and I've done it . . . but if they don't want to listen then . . . that would kill me. I don't know, that would kill me though, I think. (Interviewer asks, "Can you say what would be the hardest thing about that?") Just having to, I don't know, be away from them and knowing that they don't really know how I feel. . . I don't like to be misunderstood. I don't want them to think that I was this way when I'm not. (Interviewer asks, "What is it about being misunderstood that is the worst?") What they're thinking about me—that it's so far from the truth. [When I was in a fight with my sister and told her I didn't want her in my life anymore] I couldn't even think, I couldn't even breathe. . . . After I'd said that and during the fight, I couldn't think about anything else, I mean literally nothing else. I just sat there, thinking oh my god, what did I do, you know. . . . I just don't like conflict. I don't know why. It just makes me nervous. . . . I can't keep anything in because I'll just—I'll feel uncomfortable. I have to let everyone know how I'm feeling. . . . I can't stand to be away from someone knowing we just had bad words. I just don't like that unsettling feeling. I just need to talk about it right then. I want to get it out right then. If I don't it eats away at me. I just can't take that [Popp, 1993, pp. 133–138].

Sarah feels like her "self" is coming undone when she is in conflict with an important other. In the affiliative mindset, one's sense of wholeness is literally created within his or her relationships; there is the experience of "you make me who I am." So if we are in conflict, I don't know who I am.

As we listen to Sarah talking, the experience of identification with the other and with the interaction is palpable. In the affiliative mindset, conflict is experienced as a direct attack on one's self, on one's sense of wholeness. So when a person with this mindset takes on the perspective of the other, he or she is either extremely empathic, feeling what that other feels, or has to sever the connection and reject the other's perspective. There is a global quality in the taking on or rejecting of the other's perspective—that is, it is wholly taken on or wholly rejected, and thus there is a strong need for continuing sameness and agreement. Any rift in our sameness threatens the whole construction.

A sense of responsibility for another's feelings or well-being is an essential characteristic of the affiliative mindset. The strong need for loyalty, mutuality, and agreement that is also characteristic of the affiliative mindset is, again, part of the same fabric in which a person with the affiliative mindset not only takes the other's perspective and feels empathy with or for the

other, but takes on the whole perspective of and feels the same as the other. Hence, the organizing principle for the affiliative mindset might be, as Rodney King pleaded so poignantly in 1992, "Can't we all just get along?"

Practitioner Tip

In working with disputants who create meaning as Sarah does, the mediator should craft strategies that support disputants' efforts to develop an "inner values compass" that will help them to distinguish which of their perspectives they wish to follow. In doing so, the mediator is supporting a shift from an orientation toward external authority to the development of an internal authority that guides choice-making in a conflict.

Following the affiliative mindset is the *self-authoring mindset.* A person with this mindset could be described, as the name implies, as very much her own "author," meaning that she is no longer so concerned about or made up by other people's feelings or opinions about her; rather, her concern in this mindset is how she is making herself up, about her own integrity and competence in her own eyes and whether she is living up to her own self-generated and self-imposed standards. Someone with a self-authoring mindset now has the capacity to take many different perspectives at the same time. Whereas Sarah, with an affiliative mindset, is able to take others' perspectives one at a time, she finds herself taken over by them; someone with the self-authoring mindset is able to consider many different perspectives, the various strengths and weaknesses of each, and integrate the parts she finds useful into her own thinking. She uses others' perspectives to inform her own, not replace or take over. Maria describes her approach to working with people in conflict:

> Well, I think my personal character . . . I like to think I bring that to the table, whether it's in this discussion or anything else, I mean, you can kind of relate it to your own personal life, and how you deal with others in terms of your own personal life. You can be confrontational, but that seldom gets the results you're really looking for. So I guess it's just a personal value that I have that you can either work with people or you can choose to be in conflict over things. And I've always kind of operated from the page that working with people and having collaborative and respectful relationships is going to get you a lot further than if you're always at loggerheads with people. . . . I've had trouble with some of the things in this situation that people have brought to the

table in terms of not agreeing with their views, or you know, what they wanted to achieve. But I've always looked at it from their point of view, and I think that we've been able to develop over the last couple of years with that community—and I've had this experience with other groups in other projects I've worked with on—is that it's important to understand where your differences are, and it's important to acknowledge those differences. But they don't have to kind of necessarily derail the relationship or how you move forward. You just have to understand where people are coming from, and both parties, as long as you understand the views. . . . I mean, I think there's always an opportunity to work around those views, or if there's not, as long as there's a clear understanding between the parties. The thing that's frustrating to me, and the thing I have more difficulty with, is my colleagues in the department—I don't enjoy that kind of discussion relationship in some cases here. People are positional: their view is the right view, there is no other view or no other approach to it, and they're unwilling to move off that. And I find that really impossible to work with. I mean, it's just a terrible situation. . . .

So I'm really struggling these days in terms of walking the line of speaking the departmental lines and being in conflict with some of my own personal views. And I'm concerned that my own personal integrity is being questioned by some of the people I've built some relationships with because of the current direction the department's taking, and the manner in which we're communicating that direction and implementing it, with what we've done in the past. So a real conflict for me. . . . I'm really struggling in my professional life right now in terms of whether I can continue to work for this organization in the current direction it's going in, because I think it's fundamentally wrong—the things we're doing, the things we're condoning in terms of the people who are dealing with this situation [McGuigan, 2005, unpublished research data].

What stands out in Maria's discourse is that the conflict she feels and what she feels the conflict is about isn't the external conflict that she has a part in managing, it is her own internal conflict about whether or not she can allow herself to continue working with a department whose fundamental philosophy is so at odds with her own.

For someone with a self-authoring mindset, conflict is a natural and inevitable aspect in every relationship, including one's relationship with

oneself. With the instrumental mindset, conflict is experienced exclusively externally; in the affiliative mindset, conflict is experienced exclusively internally. In the self-authoring mindset, conflict can be experienced externally, internally, or both.

While a person with the self-authoring mindset might not like or enjoy conflict, he or she relates to it as part of the process of working things out, whether it be in an intimate relationship, a business partnership, between members of their softball team, or an entirely internal intra-personal conflict. For this person, an external conflict may be the signal of a misunderstanding or the clash of values that can usually be resolved by each person taking responsibility for his or her own part in it and coming to a better understanding of each other's position. The experience of internal conflict to someone with this mindset might feel like a threat to his own integrity or competence and his urge to resolve the conflict is to restore harmony within his own sense of integrity.

Rather than shying away from the conflict or terminating relationships as someone with the affiliative mindset tends to do, Maria welcomes the opportunity to debate the issues and deal with others directly and honestly—she finds that to be a better experience and a much healthier choice. The organizing principle for the self-authoring mindset could thus be expressed by, "Let's acknowledge and respect each other's individuality and our differences and celebrate what we can offer to each other."

Practitioner Tip

In working with disputants who create meaning as Maria does, the mediator should craft strategies that support disputants to work effectively with each of the other mindsets' unique construction of a conflict. Disputants with the self-authoring mindset often assume that every adult can engage in a conflict-resolution process the way that they do, an assumption that research reveals most North Americans cannot do (Kegan, 1994; Kegan and others, 2001).

Listening to these voices, it becomes all the more clear just how different the experience of conflict can be. What these people are describing is not simply an attitude that can be changed with enough information. Each of these people is describing the psychological world in which they live and through which they know themselves. Bill lives in a world of concrete rules, laws, concrete consequences, and a tit-for-tat kind of attitude. Although his "attitude" might seem to some as obnoxious, he is actually doing the best he can. Sarah describes a world in which the integrity of her

sense of a whole self is dependent on nonconflictual, harmonious relationships with others who understand her. She knows herself only within that world. The conflict is too disorganizing and causes too much confusion for her. Terminating the relationship terminates the conflict. Maria lives in a world in which she experiences herself as an active player in the dynamic, she takes responsibility for her own part, and she expects others to do the same. Rather than feeling disorganized by the conflict, Maria feels more disorganized by the conflict *not* being fully engaged by everyone involved.

We're guessing that by now, readers will be recognizing some of their own clients in these descriptions and, we hope, having an "ah ha" moment or two.

Implications for the Mediation Field

As we have noted, many current approaches in the conflict resolution field assume a self-authoring perspective in all of the disputants, where the disputing parties are encouraged to recognize the distinctive and unmet needs and interests of the other parties as the deep motivators of the dispute. Conflict-resolution training institutions across North America have promoted this collaborative approach to resolving disputes. Following step-by-step models, ideal conflict-resolution solutions are identified that weave the various needs and interests of the disputing parties into the resolution agreement. Conflict-resolution theoreticians and interveners promote this approach, promising that one key outcome of the conflict will be the transformation of the disputing parties' relationships.

However, Kegan's research (1982, 1994) and the previously reviewed conversations about conflict with a variety of adults suggest that when we ask disputants to take the perspective of the other parties in a conflict situation, we may be asking (some of) them to do something that they cannot do, for they may not have developed the complexity of mind that would allow them to understand the other in this way. Imagine Sarah in a conflict with Bill. He doesn't want to listen to Sarah talk about how she feels. All he wants are the facts—get everybody on track following the rules and the conflict is over. Sarah becomes even more distraught that Bill won't listen to her and doesn't seem at all interested in understanding her feelings. Bill gets louder and louder, trying to get everybody to just pay attention to the rules. Maria is willing and able to listen to everyone else's perspective, but she just ends up more frustrated and angry because

nobody else is taking any responsibility for their part in it, and she thinks they're all acting like jerks. She is frustrated because she sees the miscommunication and avoidance, but no one is willing to actually sit down and talk it through with her. Everyone is fed up with everyone else. This is not an unusual situation.

Without a developmental understanding of this scenario, a mediator might see Bill as being withholding, obstinate, dogmatic, and uncooperative and Sarah as being too sensitive, unreasonable, and uncooperative. Sarah could be seen as talking too much and she can't seem to let go of her own issues. Maria keeps trying to get everybody to engage with the issues, and she is too impatient. The mediator herself might feel at a loss—why can't they all, just for a moment, set aside their own issues and try to hear someone else's perspective? By now, we hope the answer to that question is clear.

Table 1 summarizes the three mindsets' essential experience of different aspects of conflict and highlights each mindset's capacities.

An understanding of Kegan's constructive-developmental theory completely changes how we understand conflict and mediation practice. It highlights the problematic nature of defining conflict, demonstrating that the meaning, values, and purpose of mediation are developmentally bound and profoundly inform the mediator's construction of his or her intervention process. Bush and Folger's transformational concept (1994, 2005) is, at its core, a developmental concept, a keystone in their belief that conflict can be seen as an opportunity for moral and ethical growth, an opportunity that is brought alive, or not, depending on the mediator's own mindset.

Although any mediator with sufficient training might be able to describe the characteristics, traits, and choreography of transformational mediation, the ability to practice a transformational approach is completely dependent on the complexity of his or her meaning-making. Although we can try to teach individuals the functional aspects of mediation, something that the conflict resolution field is very good at, we have not developed much capacity to encourage the growth of consciousness, a necessary complement to the mediator's tool box. The mediation education field needs to offer much more than just informational training, the acquisition of skills; it needs transformational learning, which Kegan (1994) describes as a "leading out from an established habit of mind" (p. 232). Traditional conflict resolution training alone is not up to this task; developmental conflict resolution educators are needed. A conflict

Table 1. The Three Mindsets

Content	Instrumental Mindset	Affiliative Mindset	Self-Authoring Mindset
Experience of conflict	"You're wrong, I'm right, and I can't get what I want." Conflict is experienced as concrete disagreement around concrete rules, the right way to do something, the right thing to do, following the rules, directions, law, with the consequence that I don't get what I want/need.	"You have betrayed me." Conflict feels like an irreparable rift in a relationship: "You don't/can't love/respect me if we don't agree; our mutuality has been compromised; you are not being loyal to me/my group." Self feels literally pulled apart by the rift since it is defined by the relationship that is being pulled apart by the disagreement.	"Your world view is very different from mine." Conflict is experienced as a difference of opinion or belief or standard and as a necessary element of human relationship and interaction. Also seen as a context for further information about one another and oneself, as a way to deepen understanding and connection.
Mode of dealing with conflict	"I'll keep telling you what the rules are and what you should be doing according to the rules and the directions from the boss or whoever is in charge." Will threaten, cajole, persuade, argue, and retaliate, all in service of trying to make you do the right thing.	"I can't be in relationship with you if you don't understand or agree with me." Will disengage from the relationship or change own stance to be in agreement with other, depending on the importance of the relationship; de-identify with other side of conflict and redouble sense of identity and loyalty to "our side." Or "I'll acquiesce to you in order to preserve the relationship but I will resent it and blame you."	"Help me understand your side of this, your experience. Try to hear my side and understand my experience." Will try to understand the other side/person's perspective, knowing it is different from one's own. Use as an opportunity to learn more about oneself and the other, come to a deeper understanding of the issue and each other, discern which part belongs to who and what kinds of compromises can be made.
Sees reason for conflict as	"You aren't following the rules; you aren't doing what you are supposed to do. If you followed the rules, we wouldn't have this conflict."	"You don't agree with me or understand me, and so you have betrayed my loyalty and trust and have compromised or betrayed the mutuality that we shared."	"We have a strong difference of opinion/perspective/belief/value and experience about something that is important to each of us. We're not fully understanding each other."
Preferred resolution of conflict	"Everybody just follow the rules and do what they're supposed to do and obey the law."	"Let's forget our differences, concentrate on our similarities and where we agree, and join together in the same loyalty to the same side/idea/group."	"Let's come to an understanding of each other's perspective and agree to work together to the best of our ability for the benefit of all."

curriculum that attends to the support and development of these critical capacities makes a fundamental and essential distinction between informational learning and transformational learning (Kegan, 1994; Kegan and others, 2001; Mezirow, 2000). Informational learning is characterized by the acquisition of more information, more and better skills, by *in*-forming our minds, adding to their fund of knowledge, without changing the shape or complexity of our reasoning. Transformational learning, on the other hand, is characterized by the actual transforming of the fundamental nature of our minds and the very ways we know. Kegan (2000, p. 53) describes it this way: "'Informative' learning involves a kind of leading in, or *filling* [our emphasis] of the form. Trans-*form*-ative learning puts the form itself at risk of change (and not just change but increased capacity)."

You might well be asking, how do I use a transformational approach in my work as a mediator? Working with a transformational approach requires challenging one's own assumptions about who the disputants are and what capacities they have for perspective-taking; it also means changing one's goals and expectations in response to the actual mindset of one's client(s). One of the goals in working with someone with an instrumental mindset, for example, would be to work toward helping that person begin to do more than just acknowledge that the other has a different perspective—to actually help that person begin to "try on" the other's perspective, try to imagine what the other person might be thinking and feeling and see if she can feel what that might be like, begin to feel empathy for the other. In working with someone with an affiliative mindset, the goal would be to help this person manage the fear and anxiety around the conflict itself, help this person begin to identify parts of himself or herself that are not pulled apart by the conflict. It is also helpful for a person with the affiliative mindset to begin to "critique" the perspectives that he has taken on and begin to make distinctions between different parts of the perspective. What are the strengths of this perspective? What are the weaknesses? How might he create his own perspective to reflect a more critical view of, and distinction between, the perspectives he has adopted? Someone with a self-authoring mindset has the capacity to take many perspectives, to judge the merits and limitations of each, and to integrate and prioritize different aspects from each to create a new perspective. As we noted earlier, however, a person with this mindset can become quite frustrated with other disputants who do not have the same capacity for perspective-taking. Thus, a goal for a person with the self-authoring mindset would be to develop a greater understanding of the range of perspective-taking capacities among the other disputants.

Conclusions

We have asked you to consider the notion that the mediation process is a process, a constructed world that at its very heart highlights not just the mediator's skills, but also his or her self-awareness and self-development. Ask yourself, do you actively look for different ways that the same conflict could cohere, rendering distinctly different meanings, or do you insist on your view of the conflict and its resolution as a reality, a straightforward image of what is going on "out there" (Kegan, 1994)?

While conflicts are mostly seen as problems to be solved, we believe that conflicts have the potential to *solve us*—that in the very midst of conflict we are challenged to grow, to be transformed by our experience. The motion of moving from a problem-solving to a transformational perspective has been chronicled by Bush and Folger (1994): "Rethinking the problem-solving orientation starts by questioning the premise that conflicts need to be viewed as a problems in the first place. A different premise would suggest that disputes can be viewed not as problems at all but as opportunities for moral growth and transformation. This is the transformative orientation to conflict" (p. 81).

Although it is neither promoted nor understood as a developmental approach, Bush and Folger's thinking is consistent with the notion that conflicts are often a "challenge to our pretense of completeness" (Kegan 1994). When challenged with difficult conflicts, Kegan's constructive-developmental theory charts the transformational potential enfolded within all of us.

This article endeavors to further the task of developing a more comprehensive theory of conflict, mining the wealth available in a constructive-developmental approach. Only when we have acquired a comprehensive grasp of the evolutionary nature of adult psychological growth will we be in a position to design dynamic programs capable of orchestrating and channeling conflict in positive, life-affirming directions. A commitment to the developmental dimensions of conflict opens the door to a more comprehensive way of understanding the mediator's work as a vocation and a source of psychological growth.

As with any theory or map, transformational mediation practice is more than a set of skills, more than models and active listening or arid abstractions. It is a direct, lived experience, and it is this experience that the mediator shares with clients who are in the process of suffering and growing through conflict.

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