

**Abstract of thesis entitled**

**“Buddhist Mediation: A Transformative Approach  
To Conflict Resolution”**

**Submitted by**

**Helena Suk Yee Yuen**

**For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**At the University of Hong Kong**

**In May 2008**

The course of “Buddhist Mediation” (“BM”) has been taught at the Centre of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong since 2002 as “a model of conflict resolution which reflects the Mahayana ideal of the practice of the Way of *Bodhichitta* of benefiting oneself and others in being able to resolve conflicts for oneself and for others and learn about the process of change and transformation through applications of the model.”

As the teacher of the above course, the researcher has demonstrated how the theories of the five aggregates (*pancakkhandha*) and the 12 links of the Chain of Dependent Origination (*paticcasamuppada*) (“12 links”) form the basis of a new model of reframing as a distinctive feature of BM. The theory and practice of this new model of reframing is developed by using a mixed methodology of data analysis of the following:

- (1) Process Research on three case studies from family mediation sessions and
- (2) Discourse Analysis of the journals and role plays of seven students from the BM course in year 2006-2007.

This thesis will illustrate by case and discourse analysis,

- (1) the theoretical framework for BM as a transformative approach to conflict resolution through integrating the classical theory of the 12

- links and the process of mediation, and
- (2) the new model of reframing by adapting the classical theory of Buddhism on how to deconstruct the “self” by the five aggregates as a way to teach and apply the basic skills in BM.

By integrating solution-focused brief therapy technique into the mediation process, the practice of the BM Model is based on the constructivist paradigm. As opposed to the medical model of the modernist approach which places the therapist as expert over the client’s problem, in the solution-focused model, the clients’ problems are viewed as “a function of their current definitions of reality rather than something that is objectively knowable” (Dejong & Kim Berg, 1998, p.228), and the clients’ frame of reference is respected by the therapist who takes the posture of not-knowing and allowing the clients to be the experts in resolving their own problem. In Buddhist theories and practices, the parallel of the posture of not-knowing can be drawn from the concept of skillful understanding (*yoniso-mansikara*) which is rooted in right mindfulness (*sammasati*), the seventh link in the Eightfold Noble Path.

In the context of conflict resolution, by practicing right mindfulness and skillful understanding, the cessation of conflict and affliction under the 12 links process can be achieved with the transformative effect of eliminating the three poisons: the elements of greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), which are the unwholesome roots of action (*akusala-mula*) found in all conflicts (McConnell, 1995).

By demonstrating the above, this thesis will contribute to existing knowledge in the clinical practice and theory of (a) reframing as a mediation technique, (b) the therapeutic process of change and (c) the process of transformation under the 12 links.

(482 words)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_