

CMM & Mediation: Tools Toward Sustainable Peace

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1. Research Purpose

This research paper intends to outline selected communication models from the framework of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) (Pearce, 2005) and explore their application as process tools to assist the mediator and parties in developing their perceptions of the conflict and create more meaningful and durable solutions.

Drawing on narratives provided by staff from the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) through interviews conducted in Kampala, Uganda, in July 2016, this paper aims to provide CECORE with a selection of tools for their use as they deem appropriate, including in mediation training programs and mediation processes that they may consult on or participate in.

2. Executive Summary

Despite its long-standing position as a leading alternative dispute resolution process, mediation can struggle to bring about the desired result of lasting peaceful solutions. The efficacy of the process may rely heavily on external variables, including political will, ripeness, and cultural relevance/alignment; factors which lie outside of the mediator's control. What the mediator can do, however, is guide and facilitate proceedings throughout the mediation process to increase the potential for transforming conflict between the parties. The framework of CMM provides numerous tools that can be employed in mediation contexts to open up narratives, build bridges and awaken the parties' innate reconciliatory faculties (Spies, 2006); an approach which affirms the importance of local wisdom in informing context-specific solutions. I will be engaging with these ideas of ownership, story-telling and cultural relevance in my assessments of what CMM models can offer in the mediation scenarios that follow.

3. Background

These propositions will be explored in the context of conflicts that arise in the sub-region of Karamoja, North-Eastern Uganda, which has suffered perennial conflicts underpinned by a high level of insecurity, cattle-raiding and inter-ethnic violence. New and long-standing grievances keep communities in a state of latent conflict where events can trigger rapid escalation of violence (ACCS, 2013, p. ix). Security challenges exist due to regional instability with Kenya and South Sudan, exacerbated by the negative impact of harsh climatic conditions on agro-pastoral livelihoods and prolonged political and economic marginalization.

Aligned with the national Peace, Recovery and Development Plan and internationally

funded programs such as Peace I, II and III, CECORE's mission is to find alternative and creative means of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, such as facilitating reconciliation initiatives and creating conflict monitoring and response networks. An important component of CECORE's mission is capacity-building in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and mediation: training local community members who can advance peacebuilding intentions beyond the intervention duration. Through this, communities build up their own inherent conflict tolerance and sustain peace in accordance with evolving cultures and contexts; there is no substitute for local ownership (Spies, 2006, p.3).

For the purposes of this study's focus on mediation practice, mediation will be understood as: *'a non-adversarial conflict resolution process in which a third-party neutral assists in resolving a dispute between two or more other parties'*. The mediator's role is to *'facilitate communication between the parties, assist them in focusing on the real issues of the dispute and generating of options that meet the interests or needs of all relevant parties, in an effort to resolve the conflict'* (Honeyman & Nita, 2003). These definitions are complementary to the mediation approach promoted by CECORE, emphasizing cultivating meaningful communication in order to deepen connection and understanding around the conflict, allowing solutions to naturally arise from the parties themselves. Regarding the mediation process, this study will adopt CECORE's order of proceedings (CECORE, 2007), with the addition of Preparation and Implementation stages (at beginning and end).



4. Methodology

4.1. Narrative Research

In engaging with the question of whether CMM models can assist the mediation process in the way described above, this study will undertake analysis of narratives in a Narrative Research approach (Cresswell, 2007). This involves using paradigm thinking to create descriptions of themes present within CECORE's paradigms of mediation capacity-building work to elicit comprehension of what factors affect ownership and investment in outcomes.

4.2. Interview Data

To access these narratives, interviews were conducted with individuals who were intimate with CECORE’s strategic goals and programs. I conducted three three semi-structured interviews with two members of CECORE (Rose Othieno, Executive Director and Patrick Bwire, Program Coordinator) and Lina Zedriga, a renowned activist, lecturer and local politician, who led the campaign to bring women’s voices to the Juba Peace Talks in South Sudan in 2006.

4.3. Theme Analysis

The data was organized by codifying parts of the narrative that arose from the interviews into themes which were relevant to understanding significant messages around mediation and improving the efficacy of the process (Cresswell, 2007). From that, themes were analyzed to gain more information on what common values, cultural codes, systems of belief, assumptions and theories of change were embedded into the narratives. The table below is a summary of the main points drawn from this analysis.

Narrative Themes	Belief
It is not for the mediator to bring the answer; they can only assist the parties, like the role of a mid-wife.	The solution lies within the parties. They own the conflict and therefore must own the solution. Under the right conditions, the parties can be supported in strengthening their dormant, creative conflict resolution faculties, allowing solutions to arise from within. An externally imposed solution will not last, and can even worsen conflict (ACCS, 2013).
The mediator must be patient, creative, steady and listen well to support the process and parties.	Elucidating perspectives and holding space for the parties is challenging, tiring, frustrating, slow work. Good mediators have certain innate qualities that facilitate conflict transformation.
There is no point in making agreements that will be broken, it is worth it to take longer and think carefully in creating the agreement.	There is little value in creating unsustainable agreements which are easily broken. Any solution should be owned, appropriate, relevant and be supported by the parties’ belief in it.
Spoken emphasis on terms such as collectivity, mutuality, togetherness.	Conflict is solved by bringing parties together, building bridges between them. Collaboration over competition has greater transformative power.

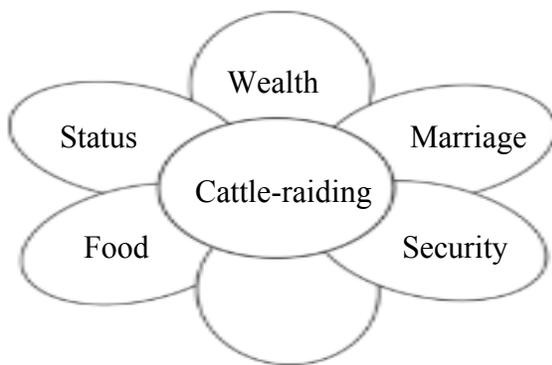
Use of CMM models, as articulated below, must be relevant to these identified conceptual and cultural norms and beliefs that are coded in CECORE’s narratives, in order to bring about the desired perspective shifts in mediation settings. Promoting this kind of local input into design of tools and processes brings authorship of meaning-making into the hands of

grass-roots actors and trainers. Instances where these practices cohere with meaningful mediation efforts ultimately fosters trust in local ownership and independence (Autesserre, 2014, p. 102).

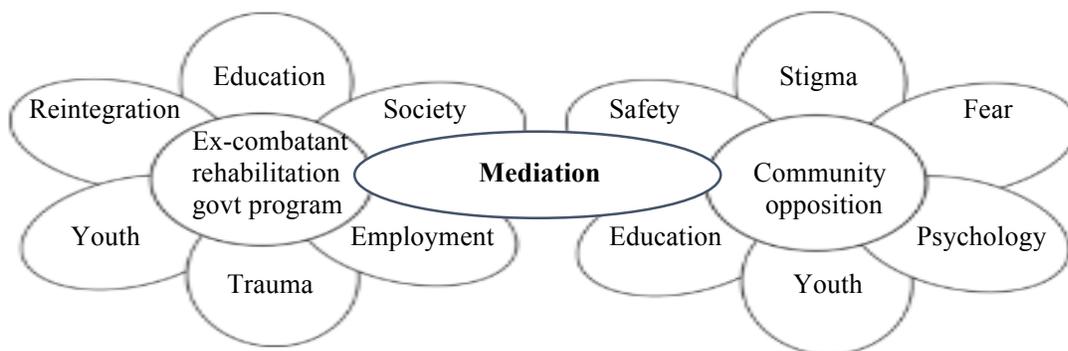
4.4. Coordinated Management of Meaning

CMM is an interpretive theory which focuses on interpersonal communication, examining how events and objects of the social world are not only made in communication, but how the process is one of co-construction between multiple persons over time (Pearce, 2004). What follows is a synopsis of four CMM models (Daisy, Hierarchy, Serpentine & LUUUTT) and evaluation of whether using they can be of use in formulating propositions for peace that are rooted in genuine party interests, effectively and holistically meeting their articulated needs.

4.4.1. Daisy



Model A



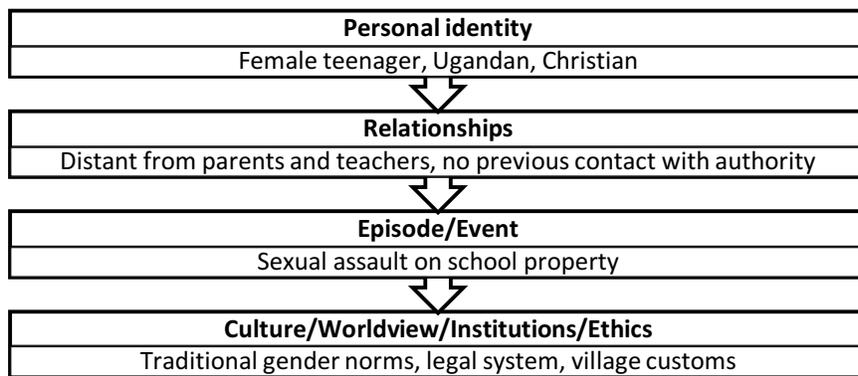
Model B

Daisy Model A provides a visual representation of the multiple interests and concerns relevant to the conflict. As an example, Daisy Model A places cattle-raiding in the center of the conflict, but other identifiable issues are engaged, such as status and wealth accumulation, food

security, marriage opportunities and so forth. Daisy Model B helps explore the richness of a communication situation, designed to remind the parties of the multiple interests and background concerns featured in the conversation (Pearce, 2004, p. 46), as the two parties come together in a joint facilitated dialogue.

These models can prove useful in resource management conflicts, such as over land or cattle, where positions in conflict may rigidly focus in on material items, however, ancillary issues also demand recognition and redress in any comprehensive solution.

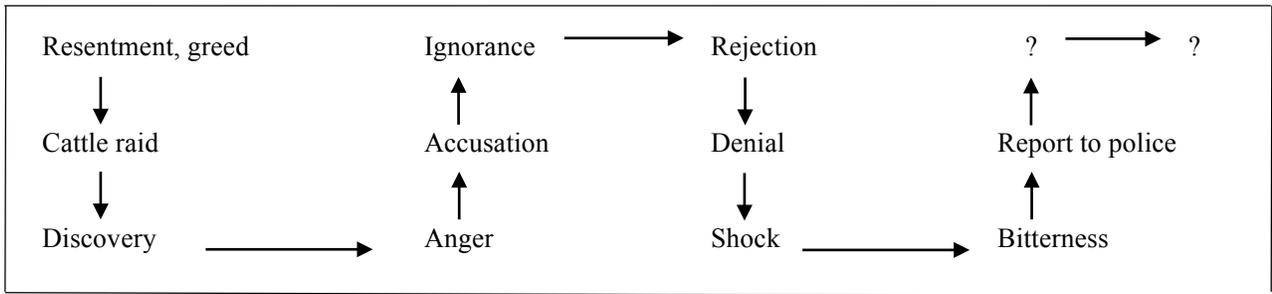
4.4.2. Hierarchy



The Hierarchy Model illustrates the organization of multiple levels of embedded contexts, within meanings at each level of the story arising from and substantiated by the previous level. The order of priority and identified levels are changeable and can change depending on conflict context.

This model is useful in structural conflicts, where comprehension of multiple layers is key to understanding the conflict's full nature. For example, in cases of sexual and gender-based violence, it is insufficient to focus merely on a single episode of assault. This model invites one to further reflect on identities of victims and perpetrators, relationships with other members of society (including authority figures), and cultural views on gender roles and legal positions.

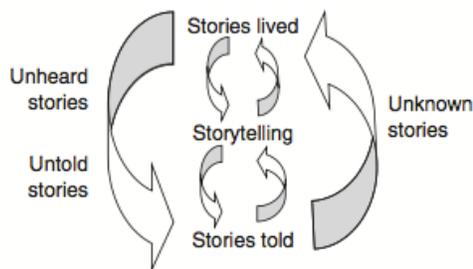
4.4.3. Serpentine



Working with this model allows one to unpack the question “*What are they making together?*” (Pearce, 2004, p. 44), with ‘they’ referring to any participants in the communication episodes. This model shows how patterns of communication construct identities, relationships, episodes and cultures (adding a linear temporal dimension to the hierarchical model), as well as highlighting the to-and-fro nature of each party’s contribution to the conflict.

This model can be useful in handling historic conflicts such as those across ethnic or religious lines. The horizontal axis can indicate not only the passing of time, but also the intensity, level of violence or volatility of the conflict history. In representing the long and brutal evolution of the conflict to the present time, parties can be called to action to deliberately change their repetitious and reactive nature if they want to avoid future increasingly harmful consequences.

4.4.4. LUUUTT



The term LUUUTT is an acronym of its components: stories Lived, Untold, Unheard, Unknowable, stories Told and storyTelling (Pearce, 2004, p. 47). The mediator and parties can utilize this model to bolster curiosity and investigate stories beneath the surface from different perspectives, aiming to enrich specific instances of communication while having healthy appreciation for mystery, that is, what lies beyond the knowable (Pearce, 2004, p. 47). Working

with this model, it is also evident that not all narratives are equal: some are well-established, easy to tell and reproduce, while others may struggle to be heard, or discerned. Further questions can arise around who holds the power to create and control the stories (Autesserre, 2014, p. 95).

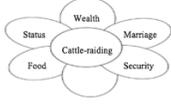
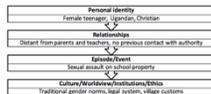
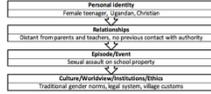
This model is particularly relevant for broaching sensitive impacts of conflict, working with trauma, and the need for psychological healing; conversations which often get sidelined in favor of material or economic development. In order for peacebuilding activities to be successful in bringing about stable reconciliation, systemic perspectives need to be taken to address all dimensions of human life: political, economic, psychological and spiritual, rather than just a narrow technical focus on political transition processes (Lederach, 1998).

4.5. Scenarios

In order to analyze the potential of these tools in mediation settings, I will explore their proposed use impact in two fictional mediation scenarios set in the Karamoja region. The first conflict is non-violent with low volatility, while the second has higher sensitivity and unpredictability, with the risk that trigger events could lead to rapid escalation of violence.

4.5.1. Scenario A – Two families from the same ethnic tribe and locality are involved in a low-intensity dispute over a farming land boundary. The legal position is unclear, and cannot be relied on to solve the conflict. The parties are aware of interests but have trouble constructively articulating these and listening to the other party. Repetitious communication patterns are the primary barrier to resolution and the parties have elected to mediate in an attempt to quell the anger, return to agricultural activities and give certainty over how the land should be divided or shared.

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Scenario A Mediation Stage	Model	Proposed Use	Proposed Impact
<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">1 Preparation</div> <div style="text-align: center;">↓</div>	<p>← Daisy Model A</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Model A</i></p>	<p>For the mediator to use in their preliminary conflict analysis to illustrate scope and breadth of relevant issues engaged around the land dispute.</p>	<p>Plan to thoroughly acknowledge and address party issues that surround the primary point of contention in the dispute. These could include food, security and status.</p>
	<p>← Hierarchy</p> 	<p>In mediator preliminary conflict analysis, to give depth and context to the relevant layers of meaning engaged.</p>	<p>Tapping into the significance of deeper underlying cultural or ethical frameworks of meaning may help the mediator to understand why certain conflict behaviors have become entrenched in each side's demand for ownership or control of the land. This may inform the preliminary agenda, and help elicit interconnections between layers for the particular conflict context.</p>
	<p>← Serpentine</p> 	<p>As a preparatory tool, the mediator can plot out a preliminary sketch of the conflict timeline, key events or tensions they are aware of.</p>	<p>Assist mediator in their understanding of the conflict timeline, highlight areas where more information is required.</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">2 Intro / Define Roles & Process</div> <div style="text-align: center;">↓</div>			
<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">3 Story-Telling</div> <div style="text-align: center;">↓</div>	<p>← Daisy Model B</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Model B</i></p>	<p>The mediator can lead a group participatory exercise where both sides contribute to a joint daisy model, adding in their interests/concerns.</p>	<p>Serves as a strong visual reminder of parties' ownership of the conflict, and supports acknowledgment that issues are overlapping and plural in nature.</p>
	<p>← Hierarchy</p> 	<p>The mediator can lead a group participatory exercise by facilitating a conversation around what layers are pertinent to the conflict, inviting all stakeholders to have input into where they perceive connections, and on what levels narratives tend to feature.</p>	<p>This model invites each to explore the perspectives of their counterparts while also enabling them to take a more thorough look at their own personal perspective. Dialogue can be had around how the elements at the top of each list form the overall context in which each story takes place and have an influence on the elements below them.</p>

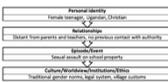
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	<p>← Serpentine</p> 	<p>In a group participatory exercise, the mediator can facilitate the creation of a joint narrative, plotting out events together, seeing causal effects and highlighting interesting points, such as events triggering escalation and reconciliation attempts.</p>	<p>Amidst the inevitable disputes about language and impact or sequence of events, parties can gain insight into each other's narrative. They may see that that multiple seemingly contradictory narratives can be held, even by one party. While this exercise can be carried out as a group, the point is not to force one joint narrative that demands compatibility (Winslade, 2008). Where previous reconciliation attempts were made, parties can discuss why they did not work, and lessons going forward.</p>
	<p>← LUUUTT</p> 	<p>The mediator can open up a dialogue designed to facilitate the parties' exploration of the constellation of narratives that exist around the conflict, delving deeper than the well-routine stories and explanations.</p>	<p>The parties have an opportunity to embrace the complexity of their world of stories and meanings, and allow for each other's story lines to also have meaning and relevance. This welcomes curiosity for those stories that are unknown, untellable etc. Through sharing of and exposure to the multitude of stories that emerge through this process, the parties can garner the understanding that (a) one's own stories are partial, local, limited or bounded, and (b) realize the tension between standing one's own ground and being profoundly open to the other (Pearce, 2005), which supports collaborative attitudes to the dialogue.</p>
<p>4 Problem-Solving</p> 	<p>← Daisy Model B</p> 	<p>Building on the previous story-telling stage, where associated issues have been mapped and explored, the mediator can invite parties to brainstorm what changes in behavior can be made, and where and when, that will disrupt the conflict cycle, (helping to refine and develop, but not offering solutions themselves). They can further evaluate collectively what will be the most promising proposals that can continue to be developed and improved.</p>	<p>Parties can address the problem as a joint task force, seeing the problem as a collective concern. In conjunction with being reminded that their relationship will continue as members of the same community, it is in their joint interest to find a solution that will meet both sides' priority needs in a fair way. The parties understand that the mediator is present to facilitate and coach but the conflict is not their problem to solve.</p>

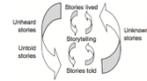
5 Implementation			
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4.5.2. Scenario B – A long-standing vengeful, aggressive and highly-emotive conflict has been unfolding over a number of years between two Karamojong tribes with numerous incidents of violence and cattle-raids periodically taking place. Various attempts to reconcile the parties, including dialogue facilitated by peace committees and village elders have failed to secure durable peace agreements, thus bringing high levels of discontent and cynicism. The parties begrudgingly agree to mediate however due to the high volatility and ease at which escalation occurs, greater levels of care need to be taken by the mediator in designing their intervention process.

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Scenario B Mediation Stage	Model	Additional Stage	Model	Proposed Use	Proposed Impact
<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">1 Preparation</div>	<p>← Daisy Model A</p> <p><i>* Use and impacts same as Scenario A</i></p>	<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Independent Initial Meetings</div>	<p>← Daisy Model B</p> 	<p>For the mediator to use with parties in individual pre-mediation sessions, to map out and give clarity to the ancillary issues that attach to the cattle-raid which affect them, such as food security, status, marriage opportunities, etc.</p>	<p>Parties' awareness of how are impacted and how they imagine the other side is impacted may help to humanize the other, acknowledging that they too have needs for security etc. that need to be met. This can reduce oversimplification of rigid demands that characterize impasse in mediation, thus preparing them for a more collaborative attitude entering the mediation session.</p>
			<p>← Hierarchy</p> 	<p>In individual pre-mediation sessions, the parties can be invited to reflect on the layers of embedded meaning that transcend the positions or demands. Perhaps they are trying to protect status, financial or relationship opportunities, which may have multiple ways of being satisfied.</p>	<p>In advance of the mediation, the parties can play a role in assessing which points can be discussed, creating their own proposed agenda, thus furnishing ownership and voluntarism well in advance of the problem-solving stage.</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">2 Intro / Define Roles & Process</div>					

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<p>3 Story-Telling</p> 	<p>← Daisy Model B ← Serpentine ← LUUUTT</p> <p><i>* Use and impacts same as Scenario A</i></p>	<p>3b Caucus</p> 	<p>← Serpentine</p> 	<p>Where historic conflicts have become emotionally entrenched, binaric opposition may blind parties to the relative nature of conflict effects (how each party impacts each other and to what degree). Admission of responsibility for these may be hard for parties to admit, particularly while facing their adversary. Separating the parties to reflect on this may be necessary in order for them to accept their contributions to the conflict over the years.</p>	<p>This is a powerful model to reinforce party authorship of the conflict, accepting that all parties have played their respective role in bringing the conflict to where it is now, and quite meaningfully, taking responsibility for the decision of where it will go next (Spies, 2006).</p>
<p>4 Problem-Solving</p> 			<p>← LUUUTT</p> 	<p>Bringing the parties into a private caucus in order to sensitively approach personal, elusive narratives can be beneficial in multiple settings, from working with vulnerable groups higher emotional or psychological safety needs, to high-power stakeholders, who may attach their power or status to certain dominant narratives and therefore fear threat from other co-existing narratives.</p>	<p>Working on perceptions during this story-telling phase can create great transformative potential for parties to reframe their experience of the conflict, through opening up their awareness of multiple and concurrent narratives, that do not necessarily weave neatly and compatibly together (Winslade, 2008). The nature of this deep and sensitive story-telling can bring interesting reframes of events and relationships that is conducive towards moving into a constructive conflict resolution approach.</p>
<p>5 Implementation</p>					

5. SWOT Analysis

5.1. Scenario A

Strengths: There is a breadth of models available which are suitable for the nature of this conflict in order to illuminate deeper levels of meaning among the patterns of communication and conflict behaviors. Once relationships are strong and people understand and own the problems, processes and desired outcomes, they are much more likely to accept responsibility for constructive and peaceful change (Spies, 2006, p. 5).

Weaknesses: The parties may not be ready to learn about the others' perspectives and narratives and resolve the conflict. If the conflict has not run its course to a place where a mediated agreement is attractive, they may prefer to see out their best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1991).

Opportunities: If the conflict is still in an early, reasonably flexible stage, the parties may have greater capacity to open their minds, be available to new kinds of questioning or navigating the relationship. The CMM tools can assist the process of bringing this out from the parties.

Threats: If the mediation fails and it appears that the conflict advances to a more competitive form of dispute resolution (which may transpire, given the evolving legal positions and assessment mechanisms regarding land rights), parties may give out private information in mediation and ultimately weaken their position against the other party.

5.2. Scenario B

Strengths: When explored skillfully by the mediator, the CMM tools can be powerful in shifting perspectives within the parties, in the same way as described above for Scenario A.

Weaknesses: It is difficult to measure the efficacy of these tools in achieving the desired impact. There are many variables affecting the ability of the mediation process to bring parties to resolution, of which communication is only one, which is particularly true of entrenched intractable conflicts (Coleman, 2011). Using these tools may be time-consuming, which might not be possible where mediation processes are time and resource pressured.

Opportunities: Taking account of the fact that the ripeness of an intense conflict for change hinges of many other factors, CMM models, if brought in at an opportune time, offer

an opportunity for transformation of the parties' perception of the conflict and of each other.

Threats: Where a conflict has already surpassed numerous efforts to reconcile, failing short-term intervening mediations can reinforce polarized positions, worsen trust (of each other and of third party interveners) and potentially deepen intractability. There is more pressure on the mediator to move the conflict out of its negative patterns, and avoid unintended consequences.

6. Viable Options

CMM is a practical theory that can be utilized by mediators to act as a means toward clarifying and guiding parties in mediation toward co-creating constructive solutions (formalized in durable, well-written agreements), developing more meaningful relationships and building better social worlds (Pearce, 2004). As much as these models are relevant to CECORE and their goals, they can be adopted and adapted for use in mediation settings to service their capacity-building strategic goals.

7. Resources

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