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The Ellison Unitary Model in Conflict Resolution Training

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Abstract

The Ellison Model Executive Mentoring Inclusive Community Building Model (The Ellison Model) is used in training people to initiate and implement inclusive community building (ICB) projects using executives and professionals from a variety of fields and industries to mentor university and pre-college students, all serving as mentors at each succeeding level of function. The model promotes ethical values and inclusion in community development. Participants at ICB conferences receive conflict resolution, relationship management and cultural sensitivity/diversity training through interactive and dramatic techniques. This essay examines the theoretical premises upon which The Model bases its philosophies. Theories examining the nexus between culture and conflict are also explored. Conflict resolution as a unitary process (from the individual perspective) is also discussed within the context of relationship management.

Author Bio(s)

Dr. Claire Michèle Rice is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Florida Memorial College. She was Visiting Assistant Professor in the DCAR at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Science (SHSS) at Nova Southeastern University. Rice received a Ph.D. at Florida International University in Comparative Sociology with concentrations in race, ethnicity and immigration studies, sociolinguistics and cultural analysis. Her research has focused in the areas of socio-linguistics, inclusive community building, conflict resolution, and mentoring.

Dr. Deryl G. Hunt's higher education consists of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology from Fort Valley State College, a Master of Arts in Sociology from Atlanta University, and a Ph.D. in Public and International Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh. In the late 1990's, he developed The Ellison Model, a mentoring approach to building inclusive communities, as well as The Ellison Model Management Plan. In 2002, Dr. Hunt developed an ICB Conflict Resolution Model. He has trained executives, middle level managers and line workers in Panama, Haiti, The Bahamas and the U.S. He served as an Associate Director of the Office of Multicultural Programs and Services at Florida International University. He has also held administrative and faculty appointments at other universities. Dr. Hunt published extensively, and authored The Ellison Model Management Plan and Community Moments and Teachable Seconds. Dr. Hunt wrote the song, "'The Lady,' An Ode to Margaret McDonald." His latest work is the development of a conflict resolution and family relationship model.

THE ELLISON UNITARY MODEL IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING

Claire Michèle Rice and Deryl G. Hunt

Abstract

The Ellison Model Executive Mentoring Inclusive Community Building Model (The Ellison Model) is used in training people to initiate and implement inclusive community building (ICB) projects using executives and professionals from a variety of fields and industries to mentor university and pre-college students, all serving as mentors at each succeeding level of function. The model promotes ethical values and inclusion in community development. Participants at ICB conferences receive conflict resolution, relationship management and cultural sensitivity/diversity training through interactive and dramatic techniques. This essay examines the theoretical premises upon which The Model bases its philosophies. Theories examining the nexus between culture and conflict are also explored. Conflict resolution as a unitary process (from the individual perspective) is also discussed within the context of relationship management.

The Ellison Executive Mentoring Inclusive Community Building Model (The Ellison Model) was developed by Deryl G. Hunt in the mid-1990s as an attempt to address the need for diversity training in the midst of tumultuous race relations in South Florida. This model incorporates a multi-tiered approach to mentoring. Executive mentors supervise and train professional mentors, who do the same for college/university protégés. College students share their insights by subsequently training pre-college students. This mentoring process becomes a learning circle (Collay, 1998) in which ideas are shared all around so that everyone becomes a dispenser and receptor of knowledge (Rice 2001; Hunt et al. 1997a-b; Hunt et al. 1998a-b).

Deryl G. Hunt's model emphasizes the need for people of various cultures—whether religious, educational, governmental or business in nature—to work together in order to develop their communities. The cultural differences inherent within these communities can bring about conflict based on overlapping vectors of diversity such as ethnicity, race, gender, age, class, education, physical disability, and more (Potapchuk et al. 1997; Peterson, 1999). Therefore, considering the operation of The Ellison Model, certain key words come to mind: relationship management, mentoring, community building, community development, cultural appreciation, diversity training, and a continuum of conflict resolution processes, from conflict prevention, to conflict intervention, to conflict management and then to conflict resolution (Hunt et al.)

Figure 1. The Ellison Model mentoring allows for the interaction of executive mentors, professional mentors, college students and pre-college students.[6]
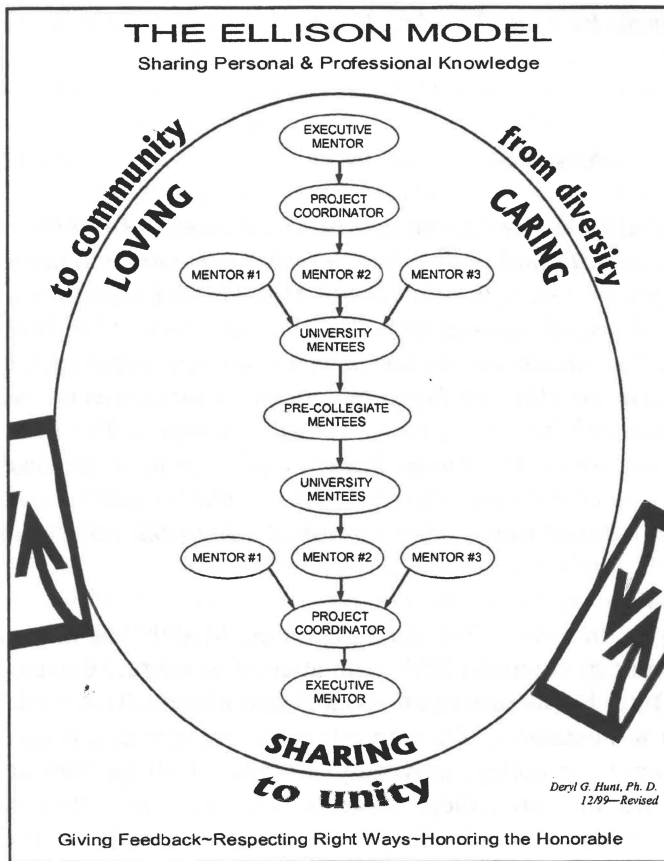
1997a-b; Hunt et al. 1998a-b). Consequently, *The Ellison Model* and *Inclusive Community Building* (ICB) are sometimes used interchangeably.

The Role of Mentoring in Fostering Inclusion

Mentoring is championed in the Ellison Model because of its potential for bridging social divides. Whether it is formal or informal, mentoring is useful in connecting people to support mechanisms that may enable them to progress personally and/or professionally. Often, mentoring interactions are informal in nature as is the case of mentoring relationships between a teacher and a student or a supervisor and subordinate (Doherty, 1999; Graham et

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[6] From "Community Moments & Teachable Seconds The Executive Speaks Series," by D. G. Hunt, L. A. Howard, L. Henderson, and O. Scruggs, 1999, slide presentations for the training program.

al., 1999; Welch, 1993). Such interactions between teacher and student are sometimes characterized as apprenticeship, depending on the situation. For example, some apprenticeships in other parts of the world involve training apprentices from the time that they are children (Coy, 1989), a practice that may not occur in the U.S. due to child labor laws.

Mentoring need not only be associated with the younger generations. In their article, "The Role of Organizational Culture and Mentoring in Mature Worker Socialization toward Retirement," in addition to retirement planning programs, Lindbo and Shultz (1998) speak of organizations implementing mentoring programs that cater to employees in their fifties who need some guidance in transitioning from the last stages of their careers as they progress toward retirement. Studies such as these point to the fact that mentoring is used in various sectors of society, from social and educational institutions to corporate organizations (Welch, 1993; Doherty, 1999).

Regardless of the arena, mentoring in all of its contexts is used to guide individuals toward a desired path. Mentors not only serve as individuals with informational resources, insight and experience, but they also provide the much needed support and coaching that their protégés need to succeed in their school, work, and/or social environment (DeBolt, 1992; Graham, 1999). Essentially, mentors and their protégés engage in a type of networking which can be mutually beneficial. Ultimately, mentors and protégés can engage in learning circles that promote professional and educational endeavors towards the end of building progressive communities (Zey, 1984; Collay et al., 1998; Jeffrey and Manganiello, 1998; Krovetz, 1999).

As previously noted, mentoring programs emerge from various social organizations, organizational and industrial institutions, educational settings, to community-service circles. However, since the goals and objectives for the protégés' personal and professional development may differ depending on the situational context, mentoring programs may be just as varied. In the case of The Ellison Model, a multi-tiered system ensures that professional and students at different stages of development interact to share ideas, network and develop mutually beneficial projects. However, unlike some traditional approaches, which might regard mentors as strictly dispensing knowledge and insight while protégés are mostly recipients, The Ellison Model encourages each actor to see himself or herself as both dispenser and receptor of knowledge. This helps to ensure that mentors regard the contributions of their protégés while facilitating a feedback loop that allows executive mentors and professional mentors to gauge the usefulness and practicality of their instructions. It also allows protégés to provide significant contributions to the community building process. Once protégés have mastered and demonstrated an understanding of The Ellison Model core values and the technical skills associated with the community project they participated in, they too can become mentors.
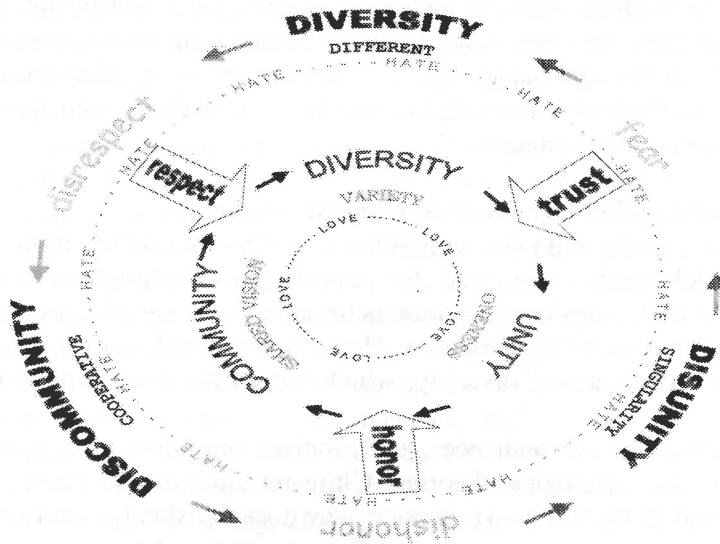
The Ellison Model Core Values

Before actively engaging in developing and implementing community projects, all actors within this dynamic exchange of ideas receive training in Ellison Model core values, which promote respect for one's self and others, caring and giving attitudes towards others, and in all things, modeling peace building behavior (Rice 2001; Hunt et al. 1997a-b; Hunt et al. 1998a-b). Mentors learn from trainers how to instruct their protégés in the core values and in gaining technical skills associated with projects. The crux of The Model's training for mentors is that they are charged to internalize and apply relationship management skills and conflict resolution processes to interactions with others.

This modeling is crucial as it legitimizes the teachings of mentors to their protégés. The idea is that mentors should 'talk the talk and walk the walk' as well. Yang (2003) suggests that practitioners in the fields of peacemaking and conflict resolution should engage in introspective exercises to address "…issues of self-awareness, self interest, self-modeling, and self-reflection, instead of putting blame on the outside world" (p. 78) as the engage in practice. With The Ellison model, this concept is extended not only to trainers, but also to the mentors and protégés, whereby they are constantly encouraged in their interactions to engage in self-examination to gauge where they stand on difficult issues surrounding diversity and conflict. This simple process becomes the first and most critical step in understanding how to resolve personal conflicts and disagreements with others.

The medium of mentoring is the development and implementation of projects designed to address the needs of particular communities. During training seminars and conferences, participants are actively engaged in Community Table exercises in which they brainstorm ways to address community problems and conflict. Examples of projects resulting from such problem-solving techniques are the following: Finding ways to improve basic skill in math, English and writing in school children, fostering college students' professional development, providing training for professionals in organizations.

BUILDING THE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY
The Discommunity, Definitions, Motivations and Values of Each

Figure 2. The Ellison Model core values illustration contrasts values that lead to community versus those that lead to discommunity.[7]

Cultural Challenges to Community Building

With the requisite active engagement and participation of citizens in the community building process (Etzioni, 1993), if people of various cultural dispositions do not know how to or will not work together due to personal (internal) conflict or disparate views of how things should be done, then it is unlikely that they will be able to build and develop sustainable communities. Conflict can bring a sudden halt to any community project (Weeks, 1992). Thus, The Ellison Model is a tool used to assist people in understanding the root causes of conflict so that they may know how to deal with problems as they arise.

Hunt's model posits that the various outward manifestations of disputes are but symptoms of internal conflicts that individuals experience. Therefore, according to the conflict resolution approach espoused by The Ellison Model, unless the work of conflict management and peace building starts within individuals involved in various disagreements,

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[7] From "Community Moments & Teachable Seconds The Executive Speaks Series," by D. G. Hunt, L. A. Howard, L. Henderson, and O. Scruggs, 1999, slide presentations for the training program.

there can be no true outward resolution among warring parties (Rice, 2001; Hunt et al. 1997a-b; Hunt et al. 1998a-b).   Most resolutions would, at most, represent 'band-aid' solutions to deep-seated problems. Therefore, the Ellison Model starts the conflict analysis at the level of the individual. As individuals learn to recognize internal strife and go on to establish a sense of peace within, they are more prone to do the same in outward conflicts. They become what we call "Ellison Model Change Agents." The process of bringing about the change is incremental and is facilitated through the coaching of mentors who have understanding of Ellison Model values and concepts.

The Nature of Conflict: Theoretical Considerations

During the past 10 years, training seminars, conferences, and various policy forums have incorporated Ellison Model tenets. The need for adjusting to different cultural perspectives has been particularly necessary for us as trainers because of the varied contexts. Group facilitations have been performed in The Bahamas, Haiti, Panama, and various cities in the United States, all dealing with issues of diversity, which impact the development of their societies.

Because of the varied nature of our audiences, ICB conflict resolution techniques draw upon psychological, social and theological theories. Ultimately, the central question posed to audiences is characterized in the following manner: why does division [or conflict] exist in societies? In addition to competition for scarce resources, causes for division in societies range from ethnic or national pride, suspicion of others' heritage, intolerance for diversity, and a general lack of mutual understanding of each other's differences. Consequently, The Ellison Model draws on various theories regarding why ethnic tension, racial hatred and personal biases persist and cause conflict in patterns of human organization. Some theological perspectives focus on unity as a meta value instead of division or separation among humans. While some thinking on human interaction draw upon biological theories as a point of departure, the biological perspectives on human evolution and interaction are treated with care and often signal some dangers of the kind of reductionism, which focuses on human genetic makeup as a guidepost for measuring relationships and conflict. Psychological and social theories such the symbolic interactionist and conflict perspectives are also useful. Such theories convey how perceptions are important and influence the meanings that people attribute to their own realities, and they demonstrate the dynamics of human interaction.

Hunt uses theological theory to answer the "why" of conflict, essentially to get at the ontological questions of *first cause*. First cause in ICB conflict analysis refers to the initial processes, which led to a state of division in human existence. Hunt draws from philosophical ideas proposed by a noted philosopher, theologian, and conflict resolution expert, William R. Jones. Jones contends that the process of division is clearly seen in the division between the organ (man) and the organism (the Creator) (Hunt, personal communication, October 2001). The premise is that conflict in the world comes from

humans' initial separation from their Creator. Subsequent to this act of separation, all conflict, whether emotional or physical in manifestation, reflect this division.   Biological theories relate to biological evolution of society. According to Aguirre, sociobiologists view society as "survival machines" (p. 27), in which the genetic makeup of individuals maximize their survival, since individuals are attracted to other they feel harbor the strongest and most compatible genes. These genes coalesce to form a new and stronger generation of individuals (Aguirre and Turner, 2004). While these ideas parallel Darwinist, Spencerist thought, (Omi and Winant, 1994), they are often used to explain racial and ethnic separation and ultimately, conflict. In their most extreme forms, some biological theories are utilized by eugenicists to justify racist ideologies, emphasizing the superiority of one race above another based on genetic salience. Certainly, such ideas contradict Ellison Model core values.

Social interaction theories such as the conflict perspective and symbolic interactionist approaches relate to social identities, values, and relationship formation and conflict. The conflict perspective, first formulated by Karl Marx (Giddens, 1971), sees conflict as the result of the oppression of the masses by the rich, who are invariably in competition of scarce resources. Rationale choice theories, highly influenced by Max Weber's theories on economics (Collins, 1986; Bendix, 1962), relate to personal or self interest. In essence, people's actions are measured toward calculated gain. They have "ends," "goals" or "preferences" (Galtung, 2000, p. 51; Ritzer, 1996, p. 263), which, if not satisfied, can lead to conflict (Galtung, 2002, 2000).

The problem arises when people's resources are scarce, and they must engage in judgments concerning which of their most valued goals must be sacrificed in order to achieve their primary goals (Ritzer 1996, p. 264). Galtung (2002) proposes, "any actor/party with unrealized goals feels frustrated and more so the more basic the goal, like basic needs and basic interests; frustration may lead to aggression, turning inward as attitudes of hatred, or outward as behavior of verbal or physical violence." Some goals or private interests, for some are crucial while to others, are unimportant or inconsequential; the former who define them as crucial may fight for them (Galtung, 2000).

In essence, "if [people] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas, 1928, p. 572). This is a symbolic interactionist concept, which influences greatly psycho-social analyses of human interaction and behavior (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Ritzer, 1996; Thompson and Hickey, 2005). Conflict arises as a result of one's perception of reality as it differs from another. Such perspectives, invariable influence conflict analyses from a cultural perspective. Since the thrust of various ICB training sessions deal with the need for understanding and appreciating culturally different people, special consideration will be given here to the role of culture in social interaction, and ultimately, individual conflict resolution processes.

Culture and Conflict Resolution Strategies

While Kevin Avruch's and David Augsburger's works establish definitions of culture and conflict, the approaches of John Paul Lederach and Deryl G. Hunt, provide some

framework as to how to go about training people to deal with conflict based on cultural differences.

Macro level analyses of conflict view communities, states or nations as units of analysis. From this perspective, Kevin Avruch examines two prevailing views of conflict: One points to power and competition for scare resources while the other hinges upon conflict arising from people's different ideas, perceptions and interpretations of their beliefs. Avruch's definition of conflict integrates both approaches: "Conflict occurs when two related parties—individuals, groups, communities, or nations-states—find themselves divided by perceived incompatible interests or goals or in competition for control of scarce resources" (1998, p. 24-25). If conflict resolution is perceived as peace-making rather than merely managing conflict or putting a stop to violence, true resolution strategies promote not just *negative peace* or the absence of war, but also *positive peace*, a state wherein social constructs and institutions that promote conflict have been dismantled (Avruch, 1998).

In the realist paradigm, conflict is about competition for limited resources and material interests. Beliefs and perceptions, notions normally associated with culture, play hardly any role in the computation of scarcity of resources, material interests, or power dynamics. While local culture pays attention to differences among local groups and societies, the unit of analysis for international relations is *states*. The role of states is to maintain power by recruit new allies and subverting enemy states—an on-going enterprise known as maintaining *a balance of power*. The only thing that differentiates states in the realist paradigm is how they wield power, politically and economically (Avruch, 1998). Consequently, examining conflict and mediation processes at the international level leaves room for many questions about what happens culturally, in communities, among people as they interact with one another, and as they face conflict within their own personal lives.

This brings us to the works of David Augsburger, Kevin Avruch, and Deryl G. Hunt. David W. Augsburger offers this insight into looking at culture and conflict, which seems to be thematic of the conceptual framework for his work: "Conflict is a crisis that forces us to recognize explicitly that we live with multiple realities and must negotiate a common reality; that we bring to each situation differing–frequently contrasting—stories and must create together a single shared story with a role for each and for both" (1992, p. 11). Among other issues, Augsburger (1992) examines interpersonal conflict, conflict between and within cultural groups.

The traditional *either-or thinking* or competitive *win-lose* approaches to conflict resolution are inadequate for dealing with cross-cultural conflict. Rather, potentially destructive conflict can be transformed into an opportunity for constructive outcomes. In the process of looking at creative means of resolving disputes, it is important, therefore, to appreciate diversity—"the uniqueness of family, clan, tribe, village, town, city or nation" (Augsburger, 1992, p. 7)—among the world's cultures while avoiding the imposition some form of uniformity that alienates the diversity of offerings found in various cultures As such,

Augsburger produces what Weber (Collins, 1986; Giddens, 1971; Bendix, 1962) call *ideal types* of cultural dispositions among people in the world.

The two ideal types are 'traditional' versus 'urbanized' or 'Westernized' cultures. Traditional cultures are more concerned with communal approaches to conflict resolution while Western cultures are focused on individualistic, personal and private concerns. Traditional cultures prefer to use third party mediation; conflict resolution is achieved indirectly, through a structured cultural pattern of interaction; resolution is prescribed by the culture's mores and customs. On the other hand, urban (Western) cultures prefer face to face engagement, while reserving third party mediation or arbitration as a last resort. Urban cultures think of conflict as defined by situations. Patterns of resolution depend on the situation and context and change from situation to situation (Augsburger 1992).

Consequently, Augsburger dichotomizes approaches to conflict resolution: *situational* versus *cultural*; *direct* versus *indirect*; *individual* versus *communal*. Conflict is sometimes between *same* and *other* (Augsburger, 1992 p. 8-9). Categorizing people into *same* and *other* allows people to control and exploit those with whom they are in conflict because of their *otherness*. This dichotomizing is based upon the culture's socially constructed reality. It is the clash of people's multiple realities that results in conflict because people often think that they all share the same reality only to find out that others have differing interpretations of that reality. The glitches in interpretations cause tension and confusion (Augsburger, 1992).

While universally we all undergo stresses and problems in our life experiences, the way we address such conflicts is culturally defined and prescribed. Augsburger contends that the unset of industrial, urban, and technical/technological systems brings new challenges to traditional Western conflict resolution processes; therefore, cross-cultural approaches to dealing with conflict should be sought out. His prevailing contention is that we must sensitize ourselves to the notion that there is more than one, structured/dominant way of dealing with and resolving conflict and, instead, welcome other cultural viewpoints on the subject (Augsburger, 1992).

John Paul Lederach proposes that the peacemaking process of bringing about change in a conflict situation involves "education, advocacy and mediation" (1995, p. 12). Lederach's ideas about popular education parallel those of Deryl Hunt in his formulation of the ICB approach. Lederach, just as Hunt, believes that people in communities must inform the formulation of models. He remarks, "from the perspective of training, people are resources not recipients"; additionally, "student and teacher discover and learn together through reflection and action, which are kept in direct relationship as the root of learning and transformation" (Lederach, 1995, p. 26). In The Ellison Model, Lederach's *teacher* and *student* are characterized as *mentor* and *mentee*; however, Hunt sees people as *both* recipients and dispensers of knowledge.

Problems that people encounter in their communities are true-to-life situations that are more practical in nature and offer more room for participants to interact (Lederach, 1995). Lederach's notions here also mirror Hunt's formulation of the Community Tables concept where mentors and protégés work on resolving community problems by formulating

tangible solutions for social problems through community projects (Rice, 2001). Problem-solving approaches to dealing with community allow people to use existing resources, their insights regarding the workings of their societies to provide viable solutions (Lederach, 1995; Rice, 2001). However, to extend the usefulness of such interactions, participants are taught to work with one another using community building values, that they have been trained to recognize and implement in their daily activities (Rice, 2001).

Conflict resolution models can either be prescriptive or elicitive. The prescriptive models try to transfer conflict resolution training from one setting into another cultural setting. Such practices are based upon an underlying assumption that ways of dealing with conflict are universal, a notion rejected by scholars, such as Johan Galtung, David Augsburger and John Paul Lederach who recognize cultural variables. Lederach relies on social constructivist approaches the understanding of culture as espoused by the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz (1967) and the symbolic interactionist Herbert Blumer (1969) (Lederach, 1995, p. 8)—and by extension, the works of scholars such as Burger and Luckman (1989), who speak of the need to understand the intersubjective worlds/realities within which people navigate. The elicitive model, catering to specific needs of different cultures, in the formulation of conflict resolution models is important in this regard. Conflict transformation approaches must be informed by the society being served. The elicitive approach is described in this manner:

> In sum, an elicitive orientation suggests that we consider what is present in a cultural setting the basis for identifying key categories and concepts to use as foundational building blocks for a conflict resolution model. It assumes that the culture is a resource and the participants are capable of identifying and naming their own realities and tools. (Lederach, 1995, p. 101)

Lederach proposes that people need not feel that they must use one approach, at the expense of the other. Rather, he suggests that depending on the setting, practitioners should be flexible and willing to use various techniques aimed at conflict resolution, whether they be elicitive or prescriptive. However, their use must be informed by the cultural context and the need of the cultural groups in question. In this regard, ICB training uses both elicitive and prescriptive approaches.

Culture and Conflict in Inclusive Community Building

Hunt sees culture simply as a way of life, and people's cultural perceptions influence their interpretations of their multiple realities, constructed through their varied lived experiences and, subsequently, through conflict. Therefore, vectors of diversity –political, religious, ethnic/racial, gender, or class, and otherwise—could all inform their cultural dispositions and drive the way people live, behave, and respond to conflict (Hunt et al. 1997a-b; Hunt et al. 1998a-b; Weeks, 1992). Cultural norms influence conflict resolution either negatively or constructively. The sources of conflict and how conflict is addressed are functions of socialization, a means by which societies instill their values and norms into

succeeding generations. For instance, in African-descent communities in the U.S., the people of African descent would be rooted in their cultural heritage, which draws from both the communal values of their African ancestry and Western concepts of individuality. The communal values of African ancestry seek to resolve external conflict at the community level, whereby the community may be as large as the nation or as small as an organization, a neighborhood or a family. However, Western individualism focuses on the rights and privileges of each single person to be free from conflict. The ICB Conflict Resolution Model is a framework wherein conflict resolution is viewed as a unitary process, which empowers the individual to overcome conflict from outside forces and from within (Hunt and Rice, 2004).

In developing strategies for dealing with conflict based upon varying cultural dispositions, in terms of practice, the authors seem to agree on the fact that people should be empowered to find ways to resolve conflict within and without, locally or internationally, in such a way that the resolution of conflict is sustainable (Augsburger 1992; Avruch 1998; Lederach 1995; Hunt 2000; Hunt et al. 1999; Hunt et al. 1997a). That is the goal of various conflict resolution approaches—fostering sustainability in any given resolution strategy. As such, whether practitioners are encouraged to utilize role-plays, to share their stories with one another, to engage in problem-solving workshops or community tables, to engage in mediations, or negotiations, they must do so understanding the dynamics of dealing with culturally different people and perhaps accepting the notion that cultural considerations play an indispensable role in the process of conflict management, resolution and/or transformation.

ICB approaches to cultural conflict resolution that have people move from "diversity, to unity, to community." While training programs in multicultural diversity aim at helping people to get along through cultural sensitivity training, they usually plateau at the level of understanding culturally different people. Therefore, tolerance of multicultural diversity does not necessarily mean true appreciation of the *other* to the point that people will want to work together on tangible projects to build sustainable and inclusive communities (Rice, 2001; Hunt et al. 1997a-b; Hunt et al. 1998a-b). As such, during various seminars, conferences and training sessions on the Ellison Model, we have incorporated various alternative methods for exposing conflict and analyzing it towards finding resolution. Using the *dramatic interactive* approach, live drama presentations, song and dance are used to convey ICB messages. Afterward, we may divide our audiences into groups whose brainstorming and problem-solving sessions would result into a project, a skit that could be used to not only illustrate the conflict, but also provide some solutions through the characters' words and deeds (Rice 2001).

Participants at Ellison Model training sessions also share their stories through the *Community Moments* exercise (Hunt 2000; Hunt et al. 1999; Hunt et al. 1997a). They are asked to write a brief essay about their personal community moments, defining moments or crisis points in people's lives in which they recognize that they have undergone a life-changing experience. These stories may describe instances wherein a person has an

experience with one of another race, gender, age group, or religion that causes him or her to eclipse prejudice, low self-esteem, physical or mental handicap to recognize the other as an equal. The idea is that through the telling of each other's stories, we can all recognize our common humanity and appreciate the fact that while there is diversity among us, the differences are but 'in degree and not in kind' as Hunt would put it.

Given the transcendent value of storytelling (Senehi, 2002), Hunt's Community Moments exercise serves as a starting point in the participants' quest to find common ground.

In some training sessions, participants are asked to explore issues or problems facing their communities that often lead to conflict among citizens and through brainstorming and problem-solving sessions (Katz and Lawyer, 1985), to devise ways of addressing them. The ultimate goal for such sessions is that participants should develop a practical project, which once refined, can be readily implemented in their communities to address the problems and bring about community resolution.

The aforementioned strategies are useful; however, they may all be for naught if people feel as though they are not satisfied within themselves with the outcome. Galtung (2002) proposes that conflict occurs when individuals feel as though they are unable to achieve a particular goal that they aspire to or desire. Two-party conflicts are the most basic and are rare in pure form; however, the average dispute has multiple actors, goals and issues. Often initial conflicts become so convoluted that it is difficult to map them out; however, the mapping out of such conflicts is essential to understanding them and finding solutions for them (Galtung, 2002).

Though Galtung's comments seem to point to macro level, societal conflicts, the same premise can be applied to the individual and his or her attempt to address interpersonal disagreements (Galtung, 2002). As individuals experience sustained internal conflict, they may soon feel frustration. This frustration may soon give way to aggression, and if not addressed in time, the aggression soon escalates to violence (Galtung, 2002). Hunt's simple premise is that if one or both parties within a basic conflict cannot reach a state of internal peace, it is hardly likely that they will be satisfied with any mediated or negotiated resolution in the long term. Consequently, this premise leads us to the formulation of a conflict perspective which first explores the individual's quest toward peace building first with the *self,* then with others.

Conflict as a Unitary Process

According to The Ellison Model, conflict resolution is a unitary process. By this is meant that the individual must recognize his or her position relative to the dispute and, with a clear vision of what took place, acknowledge his or her role in the dispute. For Hunt, outward conflict is the manifestation of internal strife within individuals. Mediation processes are useful ways to get individuals to understand their part in a dispute (Kolb, 1997; Moore, 1996). However, according to Hunt (Hunt and Rice. 2004) the mediator acts as a facilitator, who negotiates between conflicting parties and may not necessarily resolve the

deep-rooted conflicts. Hunt notes that as for the work of mediators, the art of compromise is highly prized in their work because conflict is viewed in terms of two-party or multi-party disputes. The parties involved would inevitably have to give up something in the process of bringing about some resolution to the process. However, such resolution processes yield results at the surface level. As in Lederach's (1995) work, Hunt also contends that because the resolution comes at the surface level, in the end, the same relationships remain and there is yet the potential for unresolved internal conflicts to re-emerge and fester into new conflicts.

As such, according to Hunt's conflict resolution approach, each individual is asked to look within to see what the root causes of their own personal disagreements are. While the outward conflict might be with other individuals, the initial wound and the current psychological disposition of the individual are what are at issue. Parties are then asked to look for ways to resolve the disagreements within themselves and then with the people with whom they have the conflict. If individuals are successful at dealing with the conflicts within, *first*, then they are likely to find peace with their colleagues regardless of how the outward disagreement is resolved. The outward resolution of the conflict may even become irrelevant at the highest levels of transcendence.

As noted earlier, after participants take part in The Ellison Model training, which exposes them to its core values and conflict resolution approaches, they are then asked to work on problem-solving activities that will yield tangible projects aimed at resolving some problem in their communities. While working on these community projects, conflict inevitably arises because people have differing views on what needs to be done, how it should be done, and such distinctions may emerge precisely due to their own individual cultural dispositions. These instances are precisely when they are asked to employ their conflict resolution skills in order to ensure that the community project is completed. People are consequently very much empowered to bring about change within their own cultural context using tools that they have designed collectively (Hunt, Rice, and Brown, 2004).

The Case of Mary and John

According to the Hunt approach, resolution is possible when *each party* understands that conflict is *an individual act*. Both parties involved in the conflict may not arrive at a point of resolution at the same time, and methods utilized to reach resolution vary. Consequently, each party involved in any conflict must take personal responsibility for his or her own resolution. From an emotional perspective, conflict is the result of an internal imbalance between the conscience and the emotions. These two are at war as emotions are inclined toward selfish gratification. Either the conscience or the emotions will win. However, the conscience is the moral agent interested in the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of a matter. These judgments are based on cultural values and beliefs. The outward behavioral response is often misdiagnosed as the conflict. As parties seek to resolve their conflicts, the tendency is to solve the wrong problem, wherein they deal with the outward behavior leaving the inward

war unresolved (Hunt, Rice, and Brown, 2004). Consequently, Hunt discusses three possible responses to conflict: (1) shifting blame, (2) saving face, or (3) acknowledging fault.
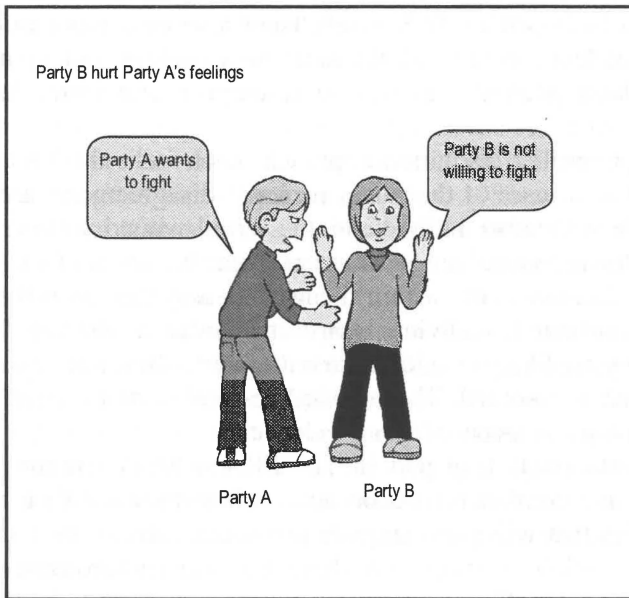

Figure 3. Conflict is a unitary process in which each individual must address his or her own internal conflict in order to make peace with others.

  The illustration in Figure 3 is an example of a typical conflict situation. Viewing conflict as a unitary process, The Ellison Model approach can be used to clarify how both interpersonal and internal conflicts can be addressed. In this particular conflict, Party B hurt Party A's feelings. Let us suppose that the two are a married couple. We will refer to Party B as Mary and Party A as John. Having had his feelings hurt, John is, consequently, looking for a fight; however, Mary is not willing to fight. At this point, Mary is at peace and is calm, but John remains offended, hurt and wanting retribution. Keep in mind that Mary could have been wrong in what she did to John. Yet, it could very well be that Mary never intended to offend John and, therefore, was unaware that she had done something wrong. Whatever the case, the person currently experiencing internal conflict is John. John may want to fight Mary out of revenge, retribution, or to gain some vindication. However, with such motives, John demonstrates that he does not have internal peace. He has not tapped into his moral convictions so as to give Mary the benefit of the doubt or even to forgive Mary. Instead, he allows himself to become troubled by this possible misunderstanding.

Shifting Blame: Based on the previous scenario, John is blaming Mary for his state of duress. Whether justified, the minute he becomes provoked and angered by Mary's actions, he gives Mary control over his emotional well-being. The resolution of John's internal strife (or internal conflict) may be hampered by John's persistent determination that he will not be satisfied until Mary answers for her perceived wrong-doing. In essence the conflict may not be resolved because one party intrinsically blames the other for the problem (Hunt, Rice, and Brown, 2004).

Saving Face: Other responses to conflict involve saving face (or glossing over a problem). In the occasion that Mary was wrong in her actions toward John, she may recoil at John's accusations and pretend that she did no wrong, or she might even avoid admission of guilt in order to save face. Saving face in interpersonal relationships often translates into maintaining a sense of false pride, a state which may lead to an impasse. There are times that during a particular conflict, neither of the parties is willing to admit to any wrong-doing. The two interlocutors may feel lessened by doing so, or they may feel that their personal authority and integrity will be subject to question in the future. This kind of hubris often leads to more conflict as one party does not want to "give in"—essentially, to surrender or to concede to another. Many interpersonal relationships may end up in suffering from "irreconcilable differences," a path avoidable only if one or both of the parties entertains forgiveness (Augsburger, 1992) in order to keep lines of communication open.

Acknowledging One's Faults: Acknowledging one's contributions to a problem leads to internal peace and thus conflict resolution, because the party who had formerly done the wrong has removed the veil of moral guilt from his conscience. In this case, if John acknowledges that he might have been too hasty in his anger towards his wife and his desire for retribution, he would hasten the possibility of resolving many of his marital problems regardless of whether an apology from Mary is forth coming. In recognizing his faults (however small they are relative to Mary's), John is being true to himself and sees his problems and shortcomings for what they are. The conflict with his spouse can be resolved because the lines of communication are open as he seeks to not only apologize to his wife but also work with her so that they both can find common ground and some solution to their marital conflicts. The hope is that John's act will trigger a reciprocal response eventually, when Mary understands the weight his concessions in the matter (Hunt, Rice, and Brown, 2004). Even if Mary remains indignant, John would have stripped Mary of her ability to dictate and manipulate his abilities to find internal peace and comfort.
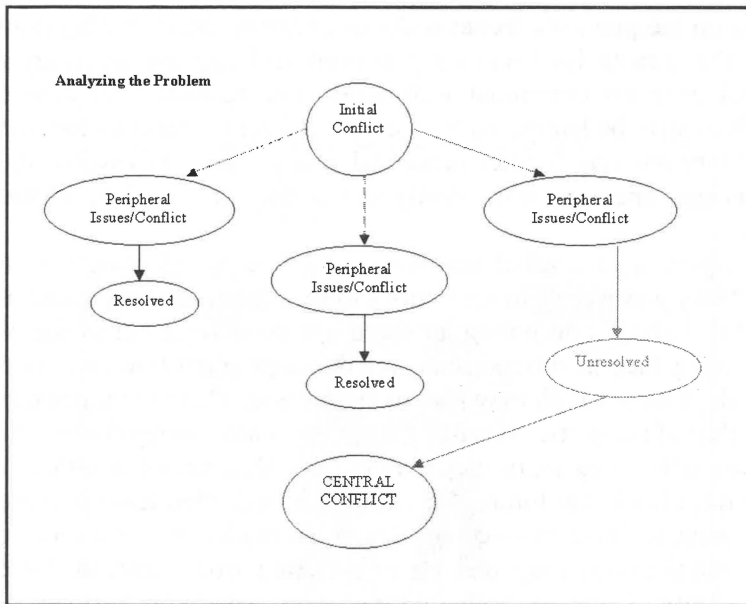
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Analyzing the Problem
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Figure 4. Once the peripheral conflicts are isolated, one may emerge as the unresolved conflict and become the central conflict.

Steps in Analyzing and Managing Conflict

In order to more effectively manage conflict, it is important to understand possible causes or sources of conflict. Hunt uses a medical analogy in describing the process: (1) diagnose the conflict, (2) analyze the conflict, (3) provide a prescription, (4) monitor the prescription and (5) revise the prescription (Hunt, Rice, and Brown, 2004)

In diagnosing conflict, it is important to understand that conflict takes place at various levels, which will inevitably impact the individual persons involved. Beyond answering the *who, what, where, when, how, or why* of the situation, it would be helpful to carefully identify external societal factors influencing individual behavior as well as interpersonal and personal factors underlying disputes. Conflict at the *macro level* refers to issues that individuals face outside of their primary reference groups. For instance, disputes with secondary reference groups (Thompson and Hickey, 2005) such as co-workers or colleagues in church, schools, or other civic organizations from communities may directly impact the individual's behavior toward family members. Community problems may range from economic deprivation, to frustrations with organizational systems and bureaucratic gridlock (Hunt, Rice, and Brown, 2004).

Micro level conflict refers to issues faced within the primary reference group or the family unit. For instance, spouses may face situations with their children and disagreements

and tension coming from extended family such as in-laws, other relatives, and close friends. Individuals may face conflicts with their parents or siblings. Open lines of communications become crucial in dealing with such conflicts (Hunt, Rice, and Brown, 2004; Katz and Lawyer, 1992; Bolton, 1979).

In analyzing conflict, it is important to consider *the basic nature* of problems associated with the conflict. Out of a single conflict, other conflicts may arise (see also Galtung, 2002). Analysis may reveal certain limitations or restrictions the initial dispute might impose on the parties involved. In this approach, once peripheral conflicts have been identified and isolated, the prevailing unresolved conflict emerges as the central problem or central conflict (Figure 4) while the initial conflict itself may become irrelevant (Hunt, Rice, and Brown, 2004).

Normally, when participants are asked to analyze cases, as a group, they are tasked with engaging in problem-solving to find viable solutions to conflict. The term *prescription* in this paradigm essentially refers to the remedy for the conflict. The prescription to the conflict must take into consideration whether the initial conflict has yet morphed into other more complex issues, some of which may emerges as the overarching conflict or *central problem* that must be addressed. The process, however, should be elicitive, considering the inputs of the parties involved and attending to each party's need for closure and personal (internal) conflict resolution. Once remedies have been proposed, participants are asked to devise ways to monitor and revise the solutions to ensure that each party's personal needs are met.

Hunt's ICB group routinely works with people who have attended ICB conferences and seminars to assist them in implementing community projects that have emerged from problem-solving group facilitations. Since its initial use 8 years ago as a mentoring program for middle school students in local public schools in the United States, the ICB group has expanded The Model's use and adapted it for utilization in organizations in need of training in management, public policy, marriage and family and the administration of justice. Notwithstanding, relationship and conflict management are core components of all training sessions.

While some participants have sought to implement The Ellison Model mentoring approach in their organizations, others have developed entire organizational framework and their own consulting programs from this approach. Among notable efforts, The ICB group has done consulting in Haiti with a woman's organization under the auspices of the Florida Agency for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas (FAVACA), a non-profit governmental organization that supports training and development initiatives in 19 countries in the Caribbean and Central America. Another collaboration resulted in the development and institutionalization of the Margaret McDonald Policy Management Administration Center in The Bahamas (MMPMAC).

MMPMAC trains employees and middle to upper level managers of Bahamian organizations, in both the private and public sectors, on management and public policy issues. MMPMAC uses such forums to open dialogue on critical issues facing The Bahamas

in the business, religious, governmental and educational sectors. Based on responses from its audiences, it serves as a think-tank for the government and private sectors on community development strategies and the implementation of such programs, using The Ellison Executive Mentoring Inclusive Community Building Model as its guide.

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