



## International Journal of Conflict Management

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To cite this document:

Peter T. Coleman Katharina G. Kugler Kyong Mazzaro Christianna Gozzi Nora El Zokm Kenneth Kressel, (2015), "Putting the peaces together: a situated model of mediation", International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 26 Iss 2 pp. 145 - 171

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJCMA-02-2014-0012>

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# Putting the peaces together: a situated model of mediation

Putting the  
peaces  
together

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Received 14 February 2014

Revised 14 July 2014

Accepted 14 July 2014

## Abstract

**Purpose** – Research on conflict mediation presents a scattered, piecemeal understanding of what determines mediators' strategies and tactics and ultimately what constitutes successful mediation. This paper presents research on developing a unifying framework – the situated model of mediation – that identifies and integrates the most basic dimensions of mediation situations. These dimensions combine to determine differences in mediator's strategies that in turn influence mediation processes and outcomes.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The approach used by this paper was twofold. First, the existing empirical literature was reviewed on factors that influence mediator's behaviors. Based on the findings of this review, a survey study was conducted with experienced mediators to determine the most fundamental dimensions of mediation situations affecting mediators' behaviors and mediation processes and outcomes. The data were analyzed through exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis.

**Findings** – The results of the study show that four of the most fundamental dimensions of mediation situations include: low vs high intensity of the conflict, cooperative vs competitive relationship between the parties, tight vs flexible context and overt vs covert processes and issues. Each of these factors was found to independently predict differences in mediators' behaviors and perceptions of processes and outcomes. These dimensions are then combined to constitute the basic dimensions of the situated model of mediation.

**Originality/value** – The situated model of mediation is both heuristic and generative, and it shows how a minimal number of factors are sufficient to capture the complexity of conflict mediation in a wide range of contexts.

**Keywords** Mediation, Conflict resolution

**Paper type** Research paper



Although academic research on mediation has progressed considerably over the past few decades (for reviews see [Duursma, 2014](#); [Kressel, 2014](#); [Moore, 2003](#); [Vukovic, 2014](#); [Wall and Dunne, 2012](#)), it still faces considerable challenges to its practical relevance. Today, the findings from research on mediation present a fractured, piecemeal understanding of what constitutes “effective mediation” and how to achieve it (cf. [Diehl and Druckman, 2010](#); [Wall and Dunne, 2012](#); [Elangovan, 1995](#); [Sheppard, 1984](#) for exceptions). Research is typically either micro (e.g. mediator style) and decontextualized from the broader system of conflict management or macro (e.g. case comparisons) and disconnected from mediator decisions and action. In addition, the eclectic nature of the field of mediation is reflected in the rich but disjointed array of scholarship from the disparate disciplines of law, international relations, political science, mathematics, psychology and organizational science, to name a few. As a consequence, many models of mediation practice are removed from sound theory or evidence-based research ([Coleman, 2011](#)). Knowledge generated within academia, oftentimes, does not reach practitioners, and valuable field experiences and practices rarely inform academic research – impeding mutual learning and development ([Honeyman \*et al.\*, 2009](#); [United Nations, 2012, 2011a, 2011b](#)).

Among the most glaring gaps in mediation research are investigations into the main antecedences of different mediation strategies, which ultimately influence the course of the mediation. In their review of mediation scholarship, [Wall and Dunne \(2012, p. 227\)](#) write:

The literature from the past decade – as that from the preceding years – indicates that mediators have approximately one hundred techniques to choose from [...] While this bountiful array of often overlapping and sometimes very similar strategies allows for a thorough description of the available mediation approaches, it can paradoxically retard the advancement of our knowledge. Faced with such a complex set of categories, scholars have not been able to grapple with the two fundamental questions for mediation: What are the major causes/antecedents of mediators’ strategies? That is, what causes mediators to use the strategies they do? And what are the major impacts of the mediators’ use of particular strategies?

To address these questions, we set out to empirically identify and model the most fundamental dimensions of mediation situations. This investigation was based on the assumption that every mediation situation can be characterized along a few basic dimensions, and that differences on these dimensions will be crucial in determining the mediator’s strategy, as well as the process and outcomes of the mediation. This approach to the study of mediation reflects a trend in social science research to “situate” individual experiences, decisions and behaviors within salient dimensions of the context in which they occur ([Coleman \*et al.\*, 2010, 2012, 2013](#); [Deutsch, 1982, 1983](#); [Jost and Kruglanski, 2002](#); [McGuire and McGuire, 1988](#); [Wish \*et al.\*, 1976](#)). To identify the basic dimensions, we surveyed the empirical literature on mediation that addressed factors thought to determine its course, and then used them systematically in an empirical survey study with experienced mediators to narrow them down through factor analysis to their most fundamental dimensions. Based on these findings, we then constructed a four-dimensional situated model of mediation.

This paper is divided into four sections. First, we summarize the findings of our survey of the published empirical literature on mediation, which focused on identifying factors that drive different mediation behaviors, processes and outcomes. Second, we

present the findings of a study informed by this review that we conducted with 149 experienced mediators to investigate empirically the most important factors in mediation that determine differences in their behaviors, processes and outcomes. We then build on these findings to present a situated model of mediation, which locates differences in mediation dynamics within the context of a basic “stimulus field” composed of four fundamental dimensions of conflict mediation. These dimensions combine to create qualitatively different types of mediation situations, where each type affords a distinct mediator orientation and strategy. The situated model emphasizes the importance of the mediator meta-competency of *adaptivity*; the capacity to read relevant changes in situations and employ strategies that fit with specific situation-types, for achieving constructive, sustainable outcomes.

The approach to model building taken in this study is integrative and iterative. It combines top – down theoretical and empirical insights from published scholarship on mediation with bottom – up empirical validation and refinement through a study with experienced mediators. The resulting model is both heuristic and generative, suggesting new pathways for research and practice. The ultimate objective of this research is to bring increased conceptual coherence and parsimony to the theoretical understanding, empirical study and practice of mediation.

## Research survey on the drivers of mediation processes and outcomes

### *Procedure*

To identify the basic dimensions of mediation situations, we first reviewed the literature. The goal of the review was to generate a comprehensive list of factors which were found to be related empirically to differences in the course of mediation. We focused on factors that determine mediation: processes, including mediators’ and disputants’ behaviors and outcomes. We began with the coding of two prior literature reviews, which focused on studies of mediation published before 2001 (Wall and Lynn, 1993; Wall *et al.*, 2001). For the years 2001-2012, we searched the published literature available through PsychInfo, Web of Science Social Science Citation Index, ABI Inform and journals from Lexis Nexus. Of the 133 articles published on mediation during this period, we first selected papers that described original empirical studies resulting in a total of 67 studies. As a second step, we selected all studies which focused on factors that were reported to affect the mediation process including mediators’ and disputants’ behaviors, as well as their perceptions of the process and outcomes. In total, 35 articles were included in the final review. These articles include quantitative and qualitative designs, field and laboratory studies, as well as correlational, experimental and case studies. The contexts of the mediation studies were varied and included family mediation, divorce mediation, mediation in higher education, mediation within organizations, labor mediation, community mediation, international mediation and simulations in the laboratory.

### *Results of the literature survey*

Wall and Lynn (1993) identified the following determinants of mediator’s techniques from the literature published before 1993: rules and standards; common ground between the disputants and the value the mediator places on the parties’ attainment of their outcomes; dispute characteristics; culture; mediator training; mediation context; and mediator ideology. In addition, they identified these determinants of mediation

outcomes: level of conflict; parties' motivations and commitment; scarcity of resources, which can reduce the number of mutually acceptable solutions; and type of issues.

Reviewing the literature from 1993 to 2001, Wall *et al.* (2001) highlighted the following determinants of mediators' approaches: environmental factors (culture, time pressure); mediator characteristics (mediator training and their acceptance of rules that govern their practice); and disputant characteristics (disputants and relationship between disputants and mediator). In addition, they identified the following determinants of mediation outcomes: level of conflict, limited resources, type of issues, disputant commitment, mediator rank, disputant power, stage of conflict and visibility of the mediation.

When we surveyed the published empirical literature from 2001 to 2012, we identified the following categories of determinants of mediator behavior:

- characteristics of the context-like culture (Callister and Wall, 2004), individual differences within cultures (Davidheiser, 2006), the number of parties in multiparty mediation (Böhmelt, 2011), a highly conflictual context (Grima and Trépo, 2009), time pressure (Grima and Trépo, 2009; Pinkley *et al.*, 1995), shifts and changes in conflict dynamics (Vukovic, 2012) and past mediation outcomes (Bercovitch and Gartner, 2006);
- characteristics of the conflict like conflict intensity and resolution status (Alberts *et al.*, 2005; Baitar *et al.*, 2012b; Bercovitch and Gartner, 2006; Pinkley *et al.*, 1995), as well as integrative potential (Maoz and Terris, 2006; Terris and Maoz, 2005);
- characteristics of disputants like gender (Herrman *et al.*, 2003) and relationship hostility (Mareschal, 2005);
- perceptions of conflict asymmetry between the parties (Jehn *et al.*, 2010) and parties' behavioral style during the mediation (Nelson *et al.*, 2011);
- characteristics of the mediator like mediator's experience and skill base (Arnold, 2007; Mareschal, 2005; Poitras, 2009), mediators' ties, knowledge and bias toward the parties (Savun, 2008; Svensson, 2009), mediator's emotional intelligence (Boland and Ross, 2010), the clarity of the mediator's role and their role-conception (Grima and Trépo, 2009; Van Gramberg, 2006), power position of the mediator (Svensson, 2007) and mediator's style (Alberts *et al.*, 2005; Asal *et al.*, 2002; Baitar *et al.*, 2012a, 2012b; Beardsley *et al.*, 2006; Goldberg, 2005; Jameson *et al.*, 2010; Martinez-Pecino *et al.*, 2008; Quinn *et al.*, 2006; Wilkenfeld *et al.*, 2003; Wall *et al.*, 2011; Yiu *et al.*, 2006); and
- characteristics of disputants' perceptions like trust between mediator and parties (Stimec and Poitras, 2009), perceived mediator credibility (Maoz and Terris, 2006), perceived mediator's acceptability (Mareschal, 2005), parties' perceptions of fair conduct (Goldman *et al.*, 2008), perceptions of procedural justice (Bollen *et al.*, 2012), perceived mediator's partiality and bias (Poitras, 2009; Jehn *et al.*, 2006), perceived mediator's warmth and consideration, as well as chemistry with parties (Poitras, 2009).

#### *Summary and conclusions of the literature survey*

The following provides a summary of the factors identified through our search of existing reviews from 1993 and 2001, and the empirical papers published from 2001 to 2012:

- *Characteristics of the context*: Environmental factors, mediation context, visibility of the mediation, time pressure, rules and standards, past outcomes, number of parties and culture.
- *Characteristics of the conflict*: Resolution status, conflict intensity, common ground between the disputants and possibilities for mutually acceptable solutions and type of issues.
- *Characteristics of disputants*: Disputant power, power asymmetry, gender, parties' motivations and commitment, relationship hostility, parties' conflict management style.
- *Parties' perceptions of*: Mediator credibility and acceptability, trust between mediator and parties, fair conduct, procedural justice, mediator partiality and bias, perceived mediator's warmth and consideration, as well as chemistry with parties.
- *Characteristics of the mediator*: Mediator style, training, ideology, skill-base, expertise, experience and rank, as well as the value the mediator places on the parties' attainment of their goals, mediator ties, knowledge and bias toward the parties and the clarity of the mediator's role.

The literature survey depicts a broad compendium of many different factors, all of which have been identified in research as important in determining mediators' strategies and the course of mediation. However, as articulated by [Wall and Dunne \(2012\)](#), the multitude of factors included in research makes it difficult to deduce the major causes/antecedents of mediators' strategies or to offer tangible, practical recommendations for mediators regarding which strategies could be most promising in a given type of mediation situation. Therefore, our next goal was to reduce the multitude of factors and empirically identify the most fundamental dimensions underlying these many factors.

### **The study: mapping the fundamental dimensions of mediation**

Our approach to this research was guided by the classic study of [Wish et al. \(1976\)](#) on mapping the fundamental dimensions of interpersonal relations. Modifying their approach, we sought to hone the findings from our literature search by surveying experienced mediators and inquiring about their experiences of the last mediation they conducted, focusing, in particular, on the aspects of the situation that they found most salient and that determined both their approach to mediation and its outcomes. The items for the survey were formed using the multitude of factors identified in the literature search. Because we sought to identify the fundamental dimensions of the mediation situation which influence mediators' choices of strategies, we only included those factors by forming corresponding items that characterize *the initial situation of the mediation* (the characteristics of the context, the conflict and the disputants which were evident in the initial situation). We excluded those factors characterizing the behaviors and perceptions which emerged *during* the mediation from this analysis (i.e. parties' perceptions during the mediation). We used the characteristics of the mediator, as well as their predominant style as control variables, in our analysis to assess the specific contributions of situational variables in determining mediator behaviors up and above mediator styles and characteristics.



To identify the most fundamental dimensions of an initial mediation situation, we conducted an Exploratory Factor Analysis with the many items that characterize the initial situation of the mediation. We also wanted to ensure that the identified dimensions were meaningful in terms of determining differences in the course of mediation processes and outcomes, so we also included items in the questionnaire which served as indicators of these variables. Through regression analysis, we sought to identify whether the basic dimensions of the initial mediation situation, which were identified through EFA, explained significant variance in the variables characterizing the process, behaviors and outcomes. Given concerns over the length of the questionnaire, and the fact that the data were collected through self-report of the mediators, only a few salient variables assessing mediation processes, behaviors and outcomes were included:

- the mediation outcome was assessed by whether an agreement was reached (cf. Baitar *et al.*, 2012a, 2012b; Beardsley *et al.*, 2006; Goldberg, 2005; Mareschal, 2005; Martinez-Pecino *et al.*, 2008; Quinn *et al.*, 2006; Savun, 2008);
- the mediation process was assessed by the mediator's perception of procedural justice (the literature commonly uses justice and fairness as indicators of mediation process, cf. Alberts *et al.*, 2005; Elangovan, 1995; Sheppard, 1984; Van Gramberg, 2006);
- disputants' behaviors were measured by communication constructiveness (similar to Nelson *et al.*, 2011; Mareschal, 2005); and
- mediator behavior was assessed through the distinction of relationship versus problem-solving strategy (Kressel, 2006) and by reporting on the necessity for preparation for mediation (Savun, 2008; Svensson, 2009).

### *Methods*

*Design and procedure.* The study was conducted at a large University in the Northeastern USA, and it used an online survey questionnaire with experienced mediators. The mediators were asked to describe and reflect on their most recent mediation case, and then to answer a series of questions about the case, including:

- demographic data and control variables, (i.e. background and characteristics of the mediators; background and characteristics of the case);
- how the variety of variables of the mediation (derived from the literature survey) characterized the initial mediation situation; and
- the variables assessing the mediation outcomes and processes, as well as the mediator's and disputants' behaviors.

As incentive, participants were offered a \$10 Starbuck's gift card.

*Participants.* Participants were recruited through an open call to the international and domestic mediation community through various professional networks. In total, 149 mediators completed the questionnaire. Mediators were diverse with regard to sex (35 per cent male), age (minimum = 25 years, maximum = 81 years,  $M = 52.74$  years,  $SD = 14.20$ ), educational background (3 per cent high school diploma, 1 per cent associate's degree, 17 per cent bachelor's degree, 42 per cent master's degree, 33 per cent doctorate's degree, 4 per cent other) and ethnicity (4 per cent African, 1 per cent Asian, 4 per cent

Latin, 78 per cent White/Caucasian and 13 per cent other). Their experience as mediators ranged from 1 to 35 years, with an average of 9.87 years' experience (SD = 8.10 years). Five per cent reported mediating on average every day, 35 per cent every week, 46 per cent every month, 9 per cent every half a year, 3 per cent every year and 2 per cent less often. The participants worked in diverse settings as mediators (13 per cent academic setting, 3 per cent alternative dispute resolution clinic, 54 per cent community mediation center, 9 per cent international setting, 14 per cent mediation center, 20 per cent within an organization, 11 per cent within a non-governmental organization, 9 per cent private mediation group, 36 per cent as an independent mediator and 14 per cent in other settings). Table II (Variables 5 – 10) shows the means of the styles which mediators reported using predominantly in their mediations (in response to the question "With what approach(es) to mediation are you most strongly identified?" with 1 = "describes you poorly" and 5 = "describes you well"). The most popular stylistic self-description was "facilitative"; the least popular was "narrative".

*Mediation cases.* Mediators were asked to reflect on the last case they had mediated, no matter what the outcome. The cases dated back less than 1 week in 43 per cent of the cases, less than 1 month in 32 per cent, less than 3 months in 13 per cent, less than 6 months in 7 per cent, less than 1 year in 1 per cent and more than 1 year ago in 4 per cent of the cases. The types of the mediation described were: 18 per cent child custody, 13 per cent community, 11 per cent small claims, 11 per cent family, 10 per cent divorce, 9 per cent landlord-tenant, 8 per cent international, 8 per cent employment, 6 per cent within organizations, 4 per cent between organizations, 4 per cent school, 3 per cent customers, 1 per cent environmental and 7 per cent other.

*Measures.* First, the mediators were asked to provide general information about themselves and describe their case in response to two open-ended questions ("Please briefly describe the mediation [i.e. the parties, what the conflict was about, and the setting and context in which it occurred]" and "Please briefly describe, in chronological sequence, what you did as a mediator and how the mediation went"). Next, they were asked to characterize the mediation on a set of bipolar items: the mediation situation rating items (which referred to the initial conditions of the mediation and were used to determine the basic dimensions) and the *variables*, which assessed the mediation's outcome and process as well as mediator's and disputants' behaviors. In addition, *control variables* addressing characteristics of the mediator and the goals of the mediation were included.

*Mediation situation rating items.* To determine the fundamental dimensions of mediation situation, we generated a comprehensive list of bipolar items (such as "Much common ground – No common ground") which were used to characterize the mediation situation on a seven-point scale. The items were derived from the factors identified in the literature search. The list of items is shown in Table I. The first 14 items (items 1-14) described characteristics of the context[1]. The next 11 items (15-25) addressed the characteristics of the conflict – its type and its intensity. The last four items focused on the characteristics of the parties including their history and relationship together.

*Variables assessing the mediation process, behaviors and outcomes.* The *process* of the mediation was measured with a three-item *procedural justice* subscale developed by Poitras and Le Tareau (2009;  $\alpha = 0.76$ , seven-point scale). The *outcome* of the mediation was assessed by asking whether or not an agreement was reached. The parties' behavior was assessed by measuring the constructiveness of parties' communications during the



Nr.	Items	Factor loading				Communalities
		1	2	3	4	
16	Low-intensity conflict – High-intensity conflict	<b>0.84</b>	0.08	-0.15	0.04	0.74
27	History of positive relations – History of negative relations [...]	<b>0.65</b>	0.01	0.04	0.14	0.44
26	Temporary conflict – Protracted conflict	<b>0.65</b>	-0.15	-0.04	-0.20	0.48
22	No latent issues fueling the conflict – Important latent issues [...]	<b>0.57</b>	0.15	0.17	-0.04	0.38
24	Task conflict – Social-emotional conflict	<b>0.54</b>	0.08	0.15	-0.25	0.38
21	Narrow range of issues – Broad range of issues	<b>0.52</b>	0.37	0.00	-0.00	0.41
25	Few concerns about identity – Significant concerns about identity	<b>0.43</b>	0.21	-0.18	-0.24	0.32
11	Situation imposed few limitations – Situation imposed extreme [...]	0.11	<b>0.69</b>	0.10	-0.10	0.51
6	Involved general mediation practices – Involved local indigenous [...]	-0.00	<b>0.65</b>	-0.08	0.03	0.43
8	Private process – Public process	-0.05	<b>0.60</b>	-0.06	0.08	0.37
1	Simple environment – Complicated environment	0.33	<b>0.58</b>	-0.18	-0.14	0.50
5	Unimportant to broader community – Issues important to broader [...]	0.19	<b>0.58</b>	-0.24	-0.16	0.46
7	No constituent support – Constituent support for parties	0.14	<b>0.50</b>	0.02	-0.11	0.28
9	No time pressures – Extreme time pressures	0.08	<b>0.49</b>	0.12	0.08	0.27
10	Not constrained by a legal framework – Constrained by a legal [...]	-0.06	<b>0.47</b>	0.20	0.07	0.27
12	Conflict not previously mediated – Conflict previously mediated	0.28	<b>0.40</b>	-0.16	0.07	0.27
13	Different social backgrounds – Similar social backgrounds	0.17	-0.09	<b>0.81</b>	-0.00	0.69
14	Different cultures between parties – Similar cultures between parties	0.08	-0.07	<b>0.78</b>	-0.07	0.63
15	No common ground – Much common ground	-0.11	0.13	<b>0.56</b>	0.02	0.35
18	Temporary relationship between parties – Ongoing relationship	0.12	-0.03	<b>0.53</b>	-0.12	0.31
28	Low party commitment – high party commitment	-0.17	0.01	<b>0.42</b>	0.26	0.27
20	Implicit issues – Explicit issues	0.05	0.07	-0.04	<b>0.74</b>	0.55
4	Covert (secret) process – Overt (obvious) process	-0.16	-0.10	-0.21	<b>0.61</b>	0.46
2	Very unsafe environment – Very safe environment	-0.21	-0.37	0.05	<b>0.55</b>	0.48
3	Informal mediation process – Formal mediation process	0.04	-0.03	-0.05	<b>0.52</b>	0.27
23	Matters of general principle – Concrete issues	0.03	0.30	0.19	<b>0.50</b>	0.37
29	Parties were of unequal power – parties were of equal power	-0.17	0.01	0.22	0.32	0.18
	Eigenvalue	5.24	2.63	2.38	1.93	
	% of variance	13.98	11.89	8.53	7.56	

**Table I.**  
Exploratory factor analysis for the underlying dimensions

**Notes:** Factor loadings  $\geq 0.40$  are boldface; the two anchors of each item are shown

mediation using the following three items ( $\alpha = 0.82$ , seven-point scale): please describe the overall mediation process:

- (1) disrespectful communication – respectful communication;
- (2) hostile communication – friendly communication; and
- (3) use of threats by parties – no use of threats by parties.

*Mediator's behavior* was assessed with three items addressing their strategy during the mediation with respect to a focus toward a settlement on the one hand or toward the relationship on the other ( $\alpha = 0.68$ , seven-point-scale), and with two items asking about the degree of *pre-mediation preparations* that were required on the part of the mediator ( $\alpha = 0.80$ , seven-point-scale). The three items assessing the mediators' strategy were: please rate yourself as a mediator in this particular mediation:

- (1) relationship-oriented – settlement-oriented;
- (2) relational style – problem-solving style; and
- (3) provided no suggestions – provided suggestions about the settlement.

The distinction between relationship and settlement/problem-solving focus is commonly used in the mediation literature (c.f. Fisher *et al.*, 1991, Deutsch *et al.*, 2006) and thus was assumed to be familiar to mediators. The two items addressing the degree of pre-mediation preparations were: this particular mediation:

- (1) did not require pre-mediation sessions – required pre-mediation sessions; and
- (2) required no preparation – required considerable preparation.

*Control variables.* We also included several control variables in the analysis. First, we included mediator's sex, mediator's experience as a practicing mediator (in years), and the *frequency* with which the mediator practiced mediation. Second we assessed how long ago in the past the mediation on which they were reflecting had occurred. Third, as indicated earlier, we assessed the mediators preferred style using Kressel's (2007) categorization: facilitative, evaluative, strategic, transformational, narrative and victim-orientated. Fourth, we also wanted to control for the goals of the mediation as perceived by the mediator using the five-item scale developed by Charkoudian *et al.* (2009), which asks to what extent the following were goals of the mediation: agreement, clarity about needs and choices, understanding of each other, control of the outcome and ability to resolve future conflicts.

## Results

*Fundamental dimensions of mediation.* To determine the most basic underlying dimensions of the mediation situation, we conducted an Exploratory Factor Analysis. The number of factors was determined using Velicer's Minimum Average Partial test (MAP; O'Connor, 2000; Velicer, 1976) and the parallel analysis approach (PA; Horn, 1965). There is increasing evidence that the MAP and the PA are superior approaches to identifying latent factors (O'Connor, 2000; Zwick and Velicer, 1986). Both methods (the MAP test and the PA following O'Connor, 2000) suggested four factors. As our main goal was to reduce the multitude of different items that characterized the initial mediation situation (i.e. mediation situation rating items that are shown in Table I) and to describe mediation situations with a few basic factors or dimensions, we used a

Principal Components Analysis. We were interested in identifying distinct and independent basic dimensions describing the mediation situation and thus we conducted a Varimax rotation. The results are shown in Table I. The four factors explain, in total, 42 per cent of the variance. In our study, we chose a very diverse set of items that were included in the factor analysis. Given the diversity of the items, we consider the communalities and the factor loadings as satisfactory for all items but one: Item 29 “Parties were of unequal power – parties were of equal power”. Hence this item was excluded from further analysis.

Table I reveals the following four underlying dimensions of initial mediation situations:

- (1) The nature of the conflict itself and especially its levels of intensity, destructiveness and intransigence. This is essentially the strength or magnitude of the conflict, or the amount of energy required to manage it effectively. It is a dimension commonly used to characterize differences in conflict in the literature (c.f., Fisher, 1990; Kriesberg, 2007; Lund, 2009; Pruitt *et al.*, 2004). This factor included the following elements:
  - low intensity – high intensity;
  - unemotional – highly emotional;
  - very simple – highly complex;
  - history of positive relations – history of negative relations;
  - temporary conflict – protracted conflict;
  - no latent issues – important latent issues;
  - task conflict – social–emotional conflict;
  - narrow range of issues – broad range of issues; and
  - few concerns about identity – significant concerns about identity.
- (2) The degree of constraints or limitations placed on the mediation by the context or environment in which it takes place. This is essentially the degree to which the context of the mediation imposes restrictions and limitations on the mediation process and outcomes. This quality has been used to characterize differences in legal mediation contexts (Korobkin, 2008) and well as cultural contexts more generally (Gelfand *et al.*, 2006). It included:
  - situation imposed few limitations – situation imposed extreme limitation;
  - involved general mediation practices – involved local indigenous practices;
  - private process – public process;
  - simple environment – complicated environment;
  - unimportant to broader community – important to broader community;
  - no constituent pressure on parties – constituent pressure on parties;
  - no time pressures – extreme time pressures;
  - not constrained by a legal framework – constrained by a legal framework; and
  - conflict not previously mediated – conflict previously mediated.
- (3) The relationship between the parties in terms of their type of interdependence and similarity. This represents the degree to which the disputants seem to be moving

with each other (similar, supportive, complementary, committed) or against each other (different, obstructive, competing, uncommitted) – or some combination of both. It has been well documented as a primary factor in determining the constructiveness and destructiveness of conflict for decades (Deutsch, 1977, 2014; Johnson and Johnson, 2005). This dimension included:

- different social backgrounds – similar social backgrounds;
  - different cultures between parties – similar cultures between parties;
  - no common ground – much common ground;
  - temporary relationship between parties – ongoing relationship; and
  - low party commitment to mediation – high party commitment to mediation.
- (4) The overt versus covert nature of the issues and processes of the mediation. This dimension distinguishes between mediation issues and processes that are transparent, acknowledged and openly discussed from those that are hidden, denied or intentionally avoided. Covert issues and agendas have been identified as a primary cause of intractability in some conflicts (Coleman, 2003), and are believed to require a fundamentally different approach from third-parties (Pinkley *et al.*, 1995). This included the following elements:
- explicit issues – implicit issues;
  - overt (obvious) processes – covert (secret) processes;
  - very safe environment – very unsafe environment;
  - formal mediation process – informal mediation process; and
  - concrete issues – matters of general principle.

To summarize, out of the myriad conditions, qualities and characteristics of initial mediation situations described in the literature and investigated in this study, four underlying factors emerged as fundamental, which describe the quality of the conflict, context, relationships, issues and processes.

*Relationship between the fundamental dimensions of the initial mediation situation and the mediation outcome, behaviors and processes.* To explore the relationship between the four dimensions identified through the factor analysis, the mediator's and disputants' behavior, and the processes and the outcomes of the mediation, scales were formed for the four dimensions using the items shown in Table I (except for item 29; scale reliabilities are presented in Table II). As the goal of the study was not to develop reliable scales, but to assess the most basic characteristics of mediation situations, the reliabilities, which are moderate to high, are considered sufficient for this analysis. The correlations of all variables included in the study can be seen in Table II.

A regression analysis was conducted, and it revealed that all four underlying dimensions explained substantive and distinct variance for at least one of the variables assessing the mediation process, outcome and behaviors (Table III). When controlling for mediator sex, experience, style-preference and goal-orientation, we found that:

- (1) the intensity and intractability of the conflict was related to the types of behaviors between the parties (the higher the intensity of the conflict, the more unfriendly and disrespectful was the behavior between the parties);

**Table II.**  
Correlations between  
variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Mediators' sex	1.65	0.48											
2. Mediators' experience	9.87	8.10	-0.07										
3. Frequency mediating	2.77	1.03	-0.12	0.07									
4. How long was the mediation ago?	2.04	1.27	-0.23**	0.08	0.60**								
5. Mediators' style: facilitative	4.54	0.85	0.15	0.09	-0.12	-0.05							
6. Mediators' style: evaluative	3.21	1.35	-0.13	-0.03	0.10	0.09	0.11						
7. Mediators' style: strategic	3.40	1.24	-0.13	0.08	0.02	0.13	0.14	0.35**					
8. Mediators' style: transformational	3.69	1.30	0.05	-0.03	-0.05	0.06	-0.01	0.01	0.27**				
9. Mediators' style: victim-offender	3.27	1.36	-0.01	-0.06	-0.13	-0.08	0.11	0.10	0.43**	0.43**			
10. Mediators' style: narrative	2.61	1.43	-0.10	-0.05	-0.09	0.04	0.09	0.13	0.21*	0.31**	0.42**		
11. Goal of mediation: agreement	5.84	3.41	-0.05	0.12	0.06	-0.01	0.07	-0.02	-0.07	-0.25**	-0.16	-0.16	
12. Goal of mediation: clarity	7.41	3.37	0.24**	0.07	-0.05	-0.10	0.07	-0.22*	-0.13	-0.04	-0.16	-0.26	0.28**
13. Goal of mediation: understanding	7.06	3.19	0.35**	0.09	-0.11	-0.10	0.07	-0.18	-0.12	0.10	-0.08	-0.02	0.19*
14. Goal of mediation: control the outcome	7.54	3.57	0.19*	0.10	-0.04	-0.12	-0.02	-0.26**	-0.19	-0.04	-0.09	-0.21	0.38**
15. Goal of mediation: ability to resolve conflicts	6.44	3.48	0.31**	0.10	-0.08	-0.07	-0.03	-0.20*	-0.11	0.10	0.04	-0.01	0.19*
16. Quality of the conflict: tractable – intractable	4.70	1.15	-0.03	0.05	0.01	0.09	-0.10	0.03	0.24**	0.31**	0.35**	0.11	-0.13
17. Quality of the context: no constraints – high const	3.05	1.17	-0.27**	-0.01	0.10	0.24**	-0.05	0.20*	0.22**	0.21*	0.29**	0.28**	-0.14
18. Quality of the relationship: negative – positive int.	4.77	1.25	0.04	0.11	0.09	0.05	0.10	-0.01	0.09	-0.01	0.03	-0.17*	-0.03
19. Quality of the process: hidden – expressed	5.28	1.03	-0.01	-0.04	-0.01	-0.01	0.09	0.14	-0.07	-0.13	-0.07	0.02	0.16
20. Agreement	0.69	0.47	-0.05	0.18*	0.01	0.13	0.07	-0.14	0.06	0.09	0.03	0.18	0.18*
21. Constructiveness of parties' communication	4.59	1.61	0.18*	0.07	-0.01	-0.15	0.12	-0.02	-0.21	-0.25**	-0.29	-0.19	0.18*
22. Procedural justice	6.34	0.95	0.07	-0.25**	0.00	-0.09	-0.01	-0.12	-0.25**	-0.15	-0.07	-0.11	0.02
23. Preparation by mediator	3.06	2.03	-0.23**	0.09	0.12	0.23**	0.03	0.21*	0.26**	0.18*	0.23**	0.17*	-0.12
24. Mediator's strategy: relationship – settlement	3.53	1.51	-0.20	0.09	0.10	0.13	0.05	0.48**	0.17*	-0.32**	-0.17	0.00	0.23**

*Continued*

**Notes:** \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; coefficient alphas are presented in parentheses along the diagonal. High values represent high levels of the named construct; Sex: 1 = male, 2 = female; mediators' experience; years; frequency mediating: 1 = every day, 2 = every week, 3 = every month, 4 = every half a year, 5 = every year, 6 = very 3 years, 7 = less often; how long was mediation ago?: 1 = less than 1 week ago, 2 = less than 1 month ago, 3 = less than 3 months ago, 4 = less than 6 months ago, 5 = less than 1 year ago, 6 = more than 1 year ago; mediators' style: 5-point scale (1 = describes you poorly, 5 = describes you well), goal of mediation: 0-10 scale (0 = the particular goal was not important at all; 10 = the particular goal was extremely important), variables 16-24: 2 anchors on a seven-point scale (Tables I and II)

Variables	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1. Mediators' sex													
2. Mediators' experience													
3. Frequency mediating													
4. How long was the mediation ago?													
5. Mediators' style: facilitative													
6. Mediators' style: evaluative													
7. Mediators' style: strategic													
8. Mediators' style: transformational													
9. Mediators' style: victim-offender													
10. Mediators' style: narrative													
11. Goal of mediation: agreement													
12. Goal of mediation: clarity													
13. Goal of mediation: understanding	0.73**												
14. Goal of mediation: control the outcome	0.72**	0.67**											
15. Goal of mediation: ability to resolve conflicts	0.61**	0.64**	0.60**										
16. Quality of the conflict: tractable – intractable	0.42	-0.05	-0.08	0.21**	(0.82)								
17. Quality of the context: no constraints–high constr	-0.20*	-0.19*	-0.18*	-0.13	0.36**	(0.74)							
18. Quality of the relationship: competitive–cooperative	-0.07	-0.05	-0.01	-0.03	0.04	-0.06	(0.64)						
19. Quality of the process and issues: hidden–expressed	0.06	0.01	0.08	-0.127	-0.20*	-0.11	0.02	(0.56)					
20. Agreement	-0.07	-0.03	-0.06	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.25**	0.14					
21. Constructiveness of parties' communication	0.21**	0.13	0.20*	0.03	-0.49**	-0.36**	0.07	0.15	0.12	(0.82)			
22. Procedural justice	-0.05	-0.18	-0.04	-0.18*	-0.21*	-0.25**	0.05	0.30**	-0.07	0.15	(0.76)		
23. Preparation by mediator	-0.17	-0.12	-0.22**	-0.07	0.41**	0.55**	0.06	-0.06	0.06	-0.30**	-0.10	(0.80)	
24. Mediator's strategy: relationship–settlement	-0.19	-0.25**	-0.18*	-0.25**	-0.03	0.24**	0.02	0.20*	0.09	-0.03	-0.07	0.11	(0.68)

Table II.



**Table III.**  
Regression analysis

Independent variables	Dependent variables				Mediator's strategy: relationship – settlement					
	Agreement reached no – yes	Constructiveness of parties' communication low – high	Procedural justice low – high	Preparation by mediator low – high						
Mediators' sex	-0.03	-0.07	0.15	0.11	0.07	0.03	-0.12	-0.05	-0.03	-0.01
Mediators' experience	0.15	0.11	0.10	0.11	-0.23*	-0.23**	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.08
Frequency mediating	-0.08	-0.08	0.07	0.04	0.01	-0.01	-0.00	0.05	-0.10	-0.06
How long was the mediation ago?	0.14	0.10	-0.11	-0.07	-0.00	0.02	0.14	0.04	0.10	0.04
Mediators' style: facilitative	0.04	0.04	0.14	0.07	-0.04	-0.09	-0.03	0.03	-0.01	-0.00
Mediators' style: evaluative	-0.20	-0.26*	0.06	0.08	-0.06	-0.09	0.10	0.04	0.40**	0.33**
Mediators' style: strategic	0.06	0.07	-0.05	-0.02	-0.25*	-0.22*	0.06	0.07	0.11	0.14
Mediators' style: transformational	0.06	0.12	-0.14	-0.04	-0.07	-0.00	0.07	0.01	-0.18*	-0.19*
Mediators' style: victim-offender	-0.07	-0.19	-0.18	-0.05	-0.09	0.15	0.25	0.07	-0.15	-0.23*
Mediators' style: narrative	0.15	0.18	-0.02	-0.02	0.01	0.02	-0.07	-0.11	0.07	0.02
Goal of mediation: agreement	0.24*	0.26*	-0.01	0.00	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.24**	0.23**
Goal of mediation: clarity	-0.09	-0.16	0.08	0.13	0.20	0.20	0.06	0.03	0.01	-0.04
Goal of mediation: understanding	-0.04	0.00	-0.06	-0.16	-0.26	-0.29	0.06	0.13	-0.16	-0.12
Goal of mediation: control the outcome	-0.21	-0.18	0.17	0.08	0.06	0.00	-0.38**	-0.35**	0.01	-0.01
Goal of mediation: ability to resolve conflicts	0.19	0.23	-0.10	0.06	-0.20	-0.11	0.13	0.10	-0.13	-0.08
Quality of the conflict: tractable – intractable		0.07		-0.37**						
Quality of the context: no constraints – high constraints		0.07		-0.15						
Quality of the relationship: negative – positive interdependence		0.28**		0.09						
Quality of the process and issues: hidden – expressed		0.25*		0.02						
$R^2$	0.19	0.30	0.21	0.35	0.21	0.30	0.24	0.44	0.45	0.51
$\Delta R^2$	0.11*	0.11*	0.14**	0.14**	0.09*	0.09*	0.20**	0.20**	0.06*	0.06*
$F$	1.41	1.96*	2.01*	3.09**	1.97*	2.40**	2.38**	4.38**	6.19**	5.90**

**Notes:** \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

- (2) the constraints imposed on the mediation process was related to the degree to which preparations were necessary, as well as and the choice of mediator's strategy (the higher the limitations, the higher the degree of preparation and the more settlement-oriented);
- (3) the type of interdependence (similarity between parties) was related to the likelihood an agreement was reached (the higher the similarity the more likely it was that the mediation resulted in an agreement); and
- (4) the overt – covert nature of the process and issues was related to procedural justice, the agreement and the mediator's strategy (the more explicit an issue was the higher was the perception of procedural justice in the mediation, the more often an agreement was reached and the more likely the mediator focused on the agreement settlement).

Together, the findings from the factor and regression analyses suggest that there are four basic dimensions of mediations, each distinguishing basic differences in the conflict (low-intensity to high-intensity), disputant relationships (positive to negative interdependence), context (unconstrained to highly constrained) and *process/issues* (overt-explicit to covert-implicit). These four dimensions of mediation are independently related to the process and outcomes of mediation, including the achievement of *agreements*, the constructiveness-destructiveness of the disputants' communications, mediator perceptions of procedural justice, mediator strategy (non-directive and relational vs directive and settlement-oriented) and degree of necessary mediator preparation. These effects remain even when mediator sex, experience, style preferences and goals, are controlled for.

In the section that follows, we propose that the findings related to the four fundamental dimensions of mediation provide us with the basic building blocks to generate a new situated model of mediation.

### Putting it all together: a situated model of mediation

In recent years, social psychology has moved toward theoretical models which "situate" individual cognition and behavior in the context of specific social and cultural forces (for a summary see Jost and Kruglanski, 2002). Our model parallels Deutsch's (1982, 1983, 1985, 2011, 2014) theory of social relations and psychological orientations, which emerged from his earlier empirical research identifying the fundamental dimensions of interpersonal relations (Wish *et al.*, 1976). Through multidimensional scaling analysis of survey data, this research identified four basic dimensions of social relationships, and theorized that these dimensions, when combined in situations, create distinctive types of social relations, and that these types of social relations would induce particular types of psychological orientations in people (for similar models see Coleman *et al.*, 2010, 2012, 2013; Coleman and Kugler, 2014; Deutsch, 1982; Kelley and Thibaut, 1978; Kelley, 1979, 1984, 1991; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Triandis, 1972; Vallacher *et al.*, 2011; Van Lange *et al.*, 2007).

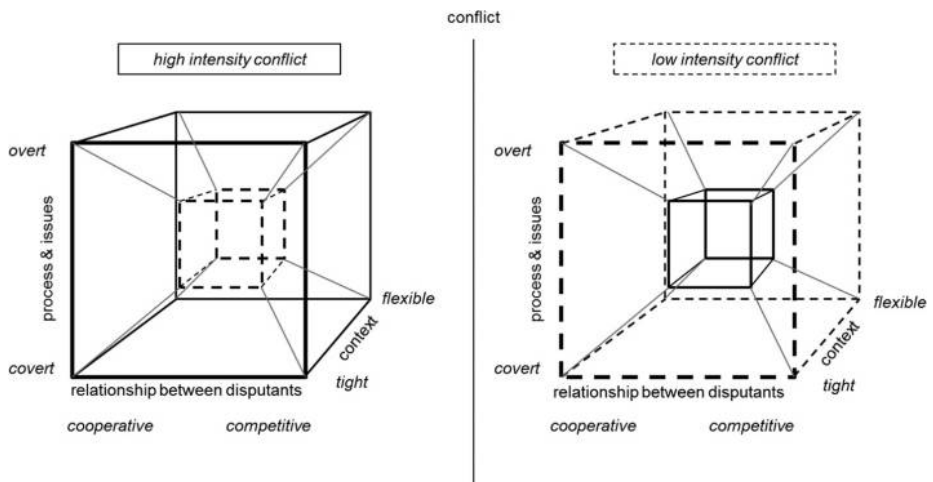
Building on the findings from our literature survey and empirical study, we suggest that the four fundamental dimensions of mediation are:

- (1) *The basic quality of the conflict*: How intense and destructive is the conflict?

- (2) *The basic quality of the relationship between the disputants:* Do the disputants share similar backgrounds and common interests or have disparate backgrounds and purely competing interests?
- (3) *The basic quality of the context of mediation:* How constraining – flexible is this situation?
- (4) *The basic quality of the process and issues:* How implicit/covert versus explicit/overt are the issues and processes in this mediation?

These four basic dimensions constitute the core of our situated model of mediation (Figure 1), which provide a sense of the most basic context in which mediators address conflict. Thus, conflicts that appear to be similar by virtue of presenting the same issue (a territorial dispute) may be experienced and responded to in fundamentally different ways depending on the settings of the four dimensions in the model. The task, then, is to articulate how different values of the parameters *combine* to promote qualitatively different experiences, behaviors and outcomes in mediation.

The situated model proposes that when conflicts are perceived by a mediator, the four basic dimensions of the mediation interact to situate the mediator psychologically in different regions of a *stimulus field* (a perceiver’s representation of his or her external world or environment, Kelley, 1997; Figure 1), and that these differences will tend to afford distinct psychological orientations to the conflict. *Psychological orientations* (POs) are more or less consistent complexes of cognitive, motivational, moral and action orientations to a given situation that serve to guide one’s behaviors and responses (Deutsch *et al.*, 2006; Deutsch, 2011). The theory predicts that, due to pressures for consistency, specific types of situations will tend to afford appropriate POs that “fit” the situation, and different types of POs will tend to induce in mediators preferences for conflict situations that are consistent with their orientations. Mediators can develop the capacity to use different types of POs through experience and as they become necessary in different situations over



**Figure 1.**  
The situated model  
of mediation

time. For example, both the formal training and early formative experiences of mediators have been shown to give shape to their preferred approach to mediation (Kressel, 2014). However, when mediators develop strong, chronic orientations, they may use POs to conflict situations that are inconsistent with the demands of the situation, which can bring about negative effects. For instance, imagine a psychotherapeutically trained mediator addressing disputants in a business merger conflict as they would two battling spouses.

In practical terms, the four dimensions translate into four basic concerns of mediators facing situations of conflict:

- (1) How intense and destructive is the conflict?
- (2) Do the disputants share similar backgrounds and common interests or have disparate backgrounds and purely competing interests?
- (3) How constraining – flexible is this situation?
- (4) How implicit/covert versus explicit/overt are the issues and processes in this mediation?

Together, these four aspects of conflict situations combine to largely determine how mediators perceive and respond to conflict mediation. Thus, the situated model of mediation contextualizes mediator decisions and actions within a framework of the most basic aspects of mediation situations. It suggests that it is the combination of mediators' personal tendencies/preferences – what they bring to the conflict (training, expertise, experience, personality, gender, culture, etc.) and the nature of the situation they face ultimately combine to determine their decisions and actions. Thus, the model allows us to investigate the value and consequences of different types of mediation strategies in qualitatively distinct situations.

In this way, the situated model provides us with a new diagnostic framework to be better able to assess mediation situation-types and mediator styles and preferences, as well as to begin to better investigate the gap in understanding identified by Wall and Dunne (2012) between specific mediation situations, their best strategies and related outcomes. Future research should be tasked to identify the behavioral strategies that are most “appropriate” or “best” in a given situation, located somewhere in the space along the four dimensions. Summing up, we offer a first prediction:

- P1.* Qualitatively different situations – with respect to the four dimensions of the situated model of mediation – will afford different psychological orientations of mediators and will require different mediators' strategies to be mediated successfully.

This prediction suggests another core aspect of the situated model of mediation: the mediator's ability to adapt. Many approaches to the study of psychological orientations suggest that even though different orientations may be useful in particular situations, problems typically arise for people when they become fixated on any one orientation or strategy, or when an individual's chronic orientation(s) fits poorly with the demands of a situation (Deutsch, 1985; Coleman and Kugler, 2014; Kelley, 1997; McClelland, 1975). From this perspective, psychosocial flexibility and the ability to identify and respond to relevant changes in the environment are critical, particularly over time or when conflict situations, are in flux. Nevertheless,

research has shown that mediators often hold strong chronic preferences for conflict orientations and find it difficult when situations require a different approach (Beardsley *et al.*, 2006; Bercovitch and Houston, 1996; Herrman *et al.*, 2003; Kressel *et al.*, 2012; Zartman and Rubin, 2002).

The situated model of mediation suggests that depending on the region in the stimulus field, different strategies will have their particular utilities, benefits, costs and consequences. Mediators may encounter very different situations and/or situations that change dramatically over time (with respect to the four dimensions). Ultimately, what is critical in different or dynamic situations is the capacity to *adapt: the capacity to identify and respond appropriately to relevant changes in conflict situations and then to use different strategies in different conflicts, or as the same conflict situation changes, in a manner that achieves goals effectively and fits with the demands of the situation* (Coleman *et al.*, 2012, 2013; Coleman and Kugler, 2011).

Research has offered support for the positive effects of adaptivity in conflict management. Case-based research on interstate negotiations found that parties tended to be more effective in negotiations to the extent that they were able to adjust their orientations and behavior to the relative (and relevant) power of the other side (Zartman and Rubin, 2002). In a correlational study (Coleman *et al.*, 2009), investigators found that more *adaptive* individuals had greater levels of satisfaction with conflicts in general than less adaptive individuals. This study also found that more adaptive individuals learned more from conflicts, and had more global perspectives on conflict; focusing more on both long- and short-term goals than less-adaptive individuals. Subsequent research revealed that higher levels of conflict adaptivity at work were associated with higher levels of satisfaction with work conflict, with co-workers, greater emotional well-being, less job stress and fewer intentions to quit (Coleman and Kugler, 2011). Research by Van de Vliert *et al.* (1995) has found that effective individuals rarely use single conflict handling styles, instead using more blended or “conglomerated” approaches that utilize the beneficial components of a variety of tactics. Research with attorneys (Williams, 1983, 1993) supports this, demonstrating that effective attorneys (as rated by their peers) use a pattern of behaviors in negotiations that do not neatly fit any one of the conflict-style categories. Similarly, more adaptive orientations to conflict mediation have also been found to be associated with higher levels of efficacy and satisfaction with mediation processes and outcomes (Beardsley, 2010, 2006; Jacobs and Aakhus, 2002; Kolb, 1994; Picard, 2004; Riskin, 2006). Although research on mediator adaptivity is scarce, the model outlined in this paper provides a solid framework with which to conduct further systematic studies. Thus, we pose P2:

- P2. The mediator’s capacity to adapt their strategy to a given or changing situation – with respect to the four dimensions of the situated model of mediation and the corresponding strategies – is crucial for the success of a mediation.

## Discussion

The model presented here was developed in response to the scattered and piecemeal state of theory and research on effective mediation, and builds on both prior research on the factors affecting mediation, as well as on a new study mapping its most fundamental dimensions. The resulting situated model of mediation suggests

that four basic dimensions characterizing differences in conflict intensity, degree of interdependence between the parties, the extent of the situational constraints operating on the mediator and the degree to which the issues and dynamics of the conflict are hidden or clearly discernable work in concert to affect the mediator's experiences and the parties' responses to the mediation. These, in turn, affect a basic set of mediation processes and outcomes (mediator preparation and strategy, procedural justice and constructiveness-destructiveness of disputants' communications). The value of the situated model of mediation, then, is less the identification of new factors and variables, and more in how the model shows how a minimal number of factors are sufficient to capture the complexity of conflict mediation in a wide range of contexts.

The situated model highlights the critical importance mediator's capacity to respond with different strategies to different or changing situations with respect to the four dimensions. Instead of emphasizing how a set of mediator style-preferences or conditions invoke positive conflict processes, the model stresses the necessity of adapting flexibly to new or changing situations in a manner that helps to achieve the disputants' goals. Conflicts can be constructively mediated when the mediators are able to move between different orientations, strategies and tactic as the different or evolving situations require.

#### *Implications for mediation research*

The studies presented and the resulting situated model of mediation offer a preliminary perspective on some of the more basic *dynamics* of mediating conflict, such as the way in which the four parameters of the model combine to affect mediation orientations, behaviors and outcomes, and the importance of adaptivity to effective and sustainable conflict management. As such, the model provides a solid step forward in bringing coherence to our basic understanding of mediation in the context of social conflict. However, much work lies ahead to better elaborate on and specify how the parameters of our model operate to affect mediation behaviors, processes and outcomes. Two propositions were posed, which need empirical elaboration. As a next step, it is especially important to empirically identify the mediator's strategies that are most effective in the different regions of the basic mediation stimulus field.

At this stage, the empirical findings from the study presented should be considered preliminary as much work lies ahead to refine the model and develop new methods to provide it with additional empirical support. The four parameters we emphasized hardly reflect all the influences on mediation scenarios. For example, the role of disputant ripeness to settle (Zartman, 1989, 2001), power differences between disputants (Coleman *et al.*, 2010) or differences in mediator power (Carnevale, 2002) may also play a central role. As the literature indicates, mediation is a complex phenomenon in which a wide variety of variables play different roles at different times. Our concern was not to provide a comprehensive account, but rather a minimalist account that serves as scaffolding for subsequent research that may identify other fundamental parameters relevant to mediation. The situated model is intended to incorporate the insights of prior research and conceptualize how the resultant model represents important scenarios of constructive and destructive conflict. The model is thus both heuristic and integrative.



The value of the model will ultimately be judged by its verification in research. The ideas we presented here now need to be translated into testable hypotheses and tested employing various methodologies, including surveys, experimentation, case studies and field projects. For example, focus groups with expert mediators should prove useful in specifying in more detail how the different situation-types of the model result in distinct goals, rules and strategies for conflict mediation. Experimental methods could also be used to test the effects of particular situation-types on inducing different types of mediation orientations, behaviors and outcomes. In particular, subsequent research should investigate how more chronic preferences for mediation orientations interact positively and negatively with specific situational differences, and how higher levels of mediator adaptivity affect the ultimate outcomes of mediation.

### Conclusion

Recent reports from the field suggest that the impact of mediation and related peace practices in the international arena over the past several decades is producing mixed results (United Nations, 2012). Despite good progress in our field, we have much work to do. We suggest that the best hope for our field is found when we keep science close to practice. Even though our field is undergoing a science-practice crisis not unlike what the field of medicine underwent in 1910 when the scandalous Flexner Report revealed a vast drift between clinical science and medical practice (Carey, 2001), there is hope. This hope thrives in places such as the project described in this paper, where the good works of academics toiling in their laboratories meet the noble works of practitioners working and learning in the field to inform new models, studies and practices to increase the probabilities of peace.

### Note

1. The aspect of culture could only be included by asking whether or not disputants were of similar cultural and socio-economic backgrounds as the study was not intended as an intercultural study.

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### Further reading

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