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Mediators' Cognitive Role Schema

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Abstract

This study identifies the cognitive role schema of 189 practicing mediators. An initial analysis of the mediators' questionnaire responses revealed 13 facets in the mediators' schema, and a second analysis condensed this to four goals: agreement, improvement of the parties' relationship, benefit the parties as well as society, and improve the mediation process. Not only do these facets indicate how the mediators think, but they also provide predictions about the mediators' behavior (e.g., they will strive primarily for agreement).

As Kressel and Gadlin (2009) noted, the empirical literature on mediation is very diverse. And it is prodigious, contributing to our knowledge of mediation in many sectors—such as industrial, civil court, divorce, victim offender, intergang, school peer, international, and interfirm conflicts. Yet the literature has not, for the most part, explored how experienced mediators think. This deficiency is unfortunate because the mediators' cognitive structure determines what factors the mediators will attend to in the environment, as well as the behavioral choices they will make, and their responses to the mediation outcomes. To address this deficiency, we explore and delineate the cognitive schema of 189 experienced mediators.

The report is organized as follows: First, we build the case for investigating mediators' thinking. Subsequently, we explain cognitive schema and then present our study of mediators' role schema. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings.

Mediators' Thinking

Over the years, numerous reviews and models have depicted mediation as a contingent process in which there are three elements: (a) contextual antecedents to the mediator's behavior, (b) the mediator's behavior, and (c) outcomes from the mediator's behavior. A succinct and widely accepted model that organizes these elements has been developed by Bercovitch and his colleagues (Bercovitch & Houston, 1993, 2000; Bercovitch & Simpson, 2010). This model indicates that the contextual variables—including the nature of the dispute and the nature of the parties—influence mediation behavior, which, in turn, determines the outcomes of the mediation.

These reviews, Bercovitch's model, and the mediation literature they capsulize all indicate that mediators have a lot to think about when they mediate. They must consider the contextual factors, choose their behavior, and decide how to respond to the outcomes of the mediation.

While mediators have many decisions to make and indeed do think about, the literature has not explored this process. There are several reasons why this deficiency should be corrected. The primary one is self-evident: Mediator thinking and decision making lie at the core of the mediation and therefore

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should be understood. Fleshing out this explanation, we can note that knowledge about the thinking process has intrinsic value. When such knowledge is present, it enhances the credibility of the thinkers and their profession. For example, the credibility of geneticists and the field of genetics skyrocketed with the identification of the DNA helix.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, probes of mediators' thinking allow scholars to explain mediators' behavior. Without this information, we rely upon guesses, traditional wisdom, and superstition. But with it, we can improve our accuracy and correct errors in our explanations and predictions. As an example, consider that mediators often report they rely upon their *intuition* in mediations and respond adaptively to varying conditions (Kressel, 2012). Such reports have spawned a widely held model that mediators contingently select their techniques according to the situation. However, current investigations of mediator thinking indicate this is not the case; rather, mediators typically ignore conditions and tend to utilize a favored strategy (Kressel, 2012).

Given that knowledge of mediators' thinking has intrinsic value, enhances the credibility of the mediator as well as mediation, and assists scholars in explaining and predicting mediators' behaviors, we contend that mediator thinking should be investigated. One initial step is to examine the mediators' cognitive schema.

Cognitive Role Schema

A schema is the cognitive representation of individuals' knowledge regarding an object, situation, role, or event (Cantor, Mishel, & Schwartz, 1982). Rather than a logical system, a schema is a structured aggregation of personal insights that individuals acquire over time based on their experiences, which allows them to cope with different challenges. A schema is a key element in human behavior because it shapes individuals' understanding of the environment. This understanding or mental representation, in turn, guides individuals' reactions to their environment (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In short, the schema shapes individuals' evaluation of reality and guides their behavior in response to it (Fiske & Dyer, 1985; Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Individuals' overall cognitive schema is comprised of various components. One of these is the self-schema, which includes individuals' perceptions of issues such as their motivation to behave in certain ways, their self-evaluation (e.g., their skills and abilities), and their affective responses to different situations. A second kind of schema is the situation schema, which focuses on individuals' perceptions of a given situation. For example, this schema would include individuals' evaluations of the nature of a situation, its causes, and its possible outcomes. The third kind of schema, which is the focus of this study, is individuals' role schema.

This last type—the role schema—is the mental representation of the body of knowledge relevant to individuals' roles in society. In the family domain, the role might be the head of the household; in the leisure domain, it could be a leader of a book club; or in the professional domain, it might be a physician, manager, or mediator (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The role schema serves as a mental filter or an interpretive lens that shapes individuals' understanding of their role in different domains and influences their subsequent behavior.

Turning to mediation, there currently are three role schemata reported in the literature. That is, there are three mental representations of the mediators' perceptions and knowledge—their ideologies—about their role as mediators (Wall & Lynn, 1993). The first schema depicts mediators' thinking and decision making as *intuitive*. Mediators monitor, consider, and respond to the relevant aspects of the mediation.

The second schema holds that the mediators identify with a formal model for their role. This model—such as transformative or facilitative—might be learned from the literature. It can be adopted from colleagues (e.g., to be neutral), or it can be self-determined, as with Kolb's dealmakers and orchestrators (Kolb, 1983).

The third schema is based upon the mediators' idiosyncratic ideas about the nature of conflict, the goals of the mediation, and the implicit intervention scripts or behaviors the mediators should employ (Kressel, 2012). For example, in Kressel, Frontera, Forlenza, Butler, and Fish's (1994) *problem-solving style*, the mediators (a) felt that conflict could be resolved if its source was identified, (b) believed the goal of mediation was to solve the underlying problem, and (c) used interrogatory scripts that generated, tested, and refined their hypotheses about the sources of the conflict.

While these three role schemata are described in the literature, they are grounded—for the most part—upon ideology rather than empirical evidence. Currently, there is no empirical evidence as to the different components or facets of the mediators' role schema. Our study, reported here, aims to address this deficiency via the delineation of mediators' role schema.

Identifying the Components of Mediators' Role Schema

In this investigation, we employed an exploratory sequential design, which is a mixed method approach. First, we collected and analyzed qualitative data, and subsequently, we built on that analysis, designing a quantitative measure for collecting and analyzing quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Researchers identify numerous reasons for using the mixed methods approach (Bryman, 2006; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; see summary in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Among those reasons, the ones most relevant to our study are complementarity (when one method enhances or clarifies another), instrument development, and the completeness of the results.

To date, there is neither empirical information nor detailed theory regarding mediators' cognitive schema. We concluded that using interviews first, as a means to explore the topic, would give us an initial understanding of the relevant issues that we would later explore with a structured questionnaire. Therefore, our goal—in study 1—was to use open-ended interviews as a foundation for developing a questionnaire. In study 2, we developed and used a questionnaire to clarify notions expressed in the interviews.

Study 1

We began by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 practicing mediators, selected from a pool of certified active mediators in Israel. These mediators were selected from a variety of mediation fields as well as from different professional backgrounds, and we tried to ensure equal representation of male and female mediators. Consequently, the sample included 11 male mediators and nine female mediators. The interviewed mediators were professionals in the fields of law, social services, management, or finance; they had mediated cases related to family, workplace, and business disputes. Mediator ages ranged from 38 to 60.

The interviews were conducted by two interviewers: the first author and a colleague. Relying upon his experience (over 20 years as a mediator) as well as the literature, the first author developed four questions that he felt addressed the major concerns of the mediation community. These questions served as the starting point for the interviews:

(1) What is the purpose of mediation?
(2) In your opinion, what are the goals of mediation?
(3) In your opinion, what is the role of the mediator?
(4) How do you define success in mediation?

The interviews began with these questions and continued with questions to ascertain the mediators' detailed thoughts. The follow-up questions were not standard or preplanned; rather, they were contingent on the mediators' initial answers. If the mediators were somewhat vague, the interviewer would ask them to be more specific. Often the interviewer would ask the mediators to explain their ideas further, to clarify points they had made or to extend their thinking. For example, if a mediator defined success as

improved relationships, the interviewer might ask "What do you mean by improved?" "Which relationships?" or "What are some additional indicators of success?" The interviews lasted about 2 hour on average, were recorded, and later transcribed. Subsequently, they were content analyzed to identify the general themes in the mediators' answers.

Study 2

With the mediators' comments and the general themes as guidance, we created a detailed questionnaire that would assess the mediators' specific thoughts about each of the four categories (i.e., about the purpose of mediation, the goals of mediation, etc.) Each questionnaire item included a statement and a rating scale of 1–6, measuring the degree of agreement with the item (where 1 is the lowest agreement value and 6 is the highest). This questionnaire is presented in Appendix 1.

In addition to assessing the mediators' cognitions about the four dimensions, we plumbed the relationship between these cognitions and three relevant variables: age, gender, and field of mediation. We were uncertain as to how these factors would affect the mediators' schema, but it seemed reasonable that such factors would to some extent shape the lenses through which mediators viewed their mediation experiences. For example, it seemed reasonable that older mediators' (vs. younger ones) goal would be to attain agreements that would eliminate the conflict.

Prior to administering the questionnaire, we conducted a pilot study by administering it to six experienced mediators, who completed the questionnaire and returned it to us with comments, mainly about the appropriateness and clarity of the questions. Upon receiving those comments, we revised the original questionnaire and developed a final version.

We sent this questionnaire to 489 certified mediators (listed in a public roster as certified in one or more mediation fields; the initial 20 interviewees were not included in this sample). We attached a letter to each questionnaire in which we asked participants to answer the questions to the best of their ability. We also emphasized the anonymity of the study. To encourage participation, we attached a small gift—a negotiation book—to each questionnaire. Within 30 days of mailing the questionnaires, we sent reminders to all participants. Ultimately, we received 189 usable questionnaires, which is a 39% response rate.

Data Analysis and Results

To discern the underlying facets in the mediators' schema, we conducted a factor analysis of their questionnaire responses for each of the four dimensions, utilizing the principal components analysis with varimax rotation.

Purpose of Mediation

Mediators were presented with 16 statements describing the essence of mediation (Appendix 1). A factor analysis of their responses yielded four factors that explained 59% of the variance. The item loadings for these factors are represented in Table 1. As this table indicates, the first eight items, "Mediation helps individuals grow morally," "Mediation is a way of life," "Mediation is an educational experience," "Mediation helps people recognize and attend to others' needs," "Mediation is a tool to foster communication between people," "Mediation empowers people by enhancing their self-worth," "Mediation encourages the individual to help him or herself," "Mediation transforms individuals and society as a whole," loaded on the first factor. Two items, "Mediation reduces power imbalances in society" and "Mediation increases individuals' power versus the authorities," loaded on the second factor. The items "Mediation amplifies power gaps in society," "Mediation perpetuates mistreatment of the weaker individuals in society and the overlooking of such individuals' achievements," and "The confidentiality and lack of regulation of mediation results in manipulating weaker individuals" loaded on the third factor. Finally, the items "Mediation is a flexible process for resolving conflicts," "Mediation is a technique for

Table 1
Factor Analysis for the Purpose of Mediation

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Mediation helps individuals grow morally	**.78**	.3	.08	−.00
Mediation is a way of life	**.77**	.02	−.15	.18
Mediation is an educational experience	**.76**	.13	.08	.21
Mediation helps people recognize and attend to others' needs	**.68**	.27	−.18	.01
Mediation is a tool to foster communication between people	**.67**	.05	−.12	−.05
Mediation empowers people by enhancing their self-worth	**.63**	.38	.04	−.02
Mediation encourages the individual to help him or herself	**.55**	.24	.08	−.08
Mediation transforms individuals and society as a whole	**.54**	.45	.01	.09
Mediation reduces power imbalances in society	.33	**.74**	−.14	.12
Mediation increases individuals' power versus the authorities	.33	**.74**	.11	.11
Mediation amplifies power gaps in society	−.15	.03	**.79**	−.04
Mediation perpetuates mistreatment of the weaker individuals in society and the overlooking such individuals' achievements	−.07	.12	**.75**	−.14
The confidentiality and lack of regulation of mediation results in manipulating weaker individuals	.23	−.36	**.66**	−.12
Mediation is a flexible process for resolving conflicts	.1	.12	−.13	**.75**
Mediation is a technique for resolving conflicts	−.25	.09	−.05	**.72**
Mediation is a cost effective method to resolve conflicts	.31	.00	−.09	**.69**
	α = .86	α = .70	α = .60	α = .59

Note. Bold values indicate item loadings for the factors.

resolving conflicts," and "Mediation is a cost effective method for resolving conflicts" loaded on the fourth factor.

The items that loaded on factor 1 all reflect a positive effect of growth, development, and transformation of the individuals involved in conflict; therefore, we labeled this factor *transformative*. The items that loaded on factor 2 relate to reducing gaps in society and strengthening individuals' power in society; this factor was therefore labeled *social positive*. The items that loaded on factor 3 reflect the opposite idea, that of amplifying social gaps and weakening individuals' power and ability to achieve; therefore, we labeled this factor *social negative*. The items that loaded on factor 4 reflect mediation as a flexible and efficient process for resolving conflicts; therefore, we labeled this factor *instrumental*.

Goals of Mediation

Mediators were presented with nine statements concerning the goals of mediation, and the factor analysis indicated that these items loaded on three factors that explained 69% of the variance. As Table 2 indicates, the first four items loaded on factor 1. We labeled this factor *relationship* because each of these items deals with strengthening or improving the relationship between the parties. The next three items loaded on factor 2, which we labeled *process* because these items emphasize the elements of the process of mediation. And the last two items loaded on a third factor, which we labeled *agreement* because the components emphasize the resolution or settlement of the conflict.

Role of the Mediator

Mediators were presented with seven statements about the role of the mediator, and a factor analysis indicated that these items loaded on three factors, as shown in Table 3. These factors explained 62% of the variance.

As Table 3 indicates, the first three items loaded on factor 1. We labeled this factor the *helper* because the three items emphasize mediators' specific helping behaviors of fostering communication between the parties, helping in building trust between the parties, and providing a process that would enable the

Table 2
Factor Analysis for the Goals of Mediation

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
To build trust between the parties	**.90**	−.07	−.07
To foster communication between the parties	**.83**	.03	−.08
To empower the parties	**.72**	.43	−.05
To change parties' behavior	**.71**	.27	.05
Help parties discover their interests	.13	**.83**	.04
Help parties understand the different settlement options	.01	**.81**	−.06
To create a better society	.45	**.61**	.25
Bring parties to agreement	.09	−.03	**.85**
To settle the dispute	−.08	.08	**.82**
	α = .81	α = .61	α = .57

Note. Bold values indicate item loadings for the factors.

Table 3
Factor Analysis for the Role of the Mediator

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
To foster communication between the parties	**.83**	.05	.02
To help build trust between the parties	**.78**	.05	.13
To supply the parties with a structure in which they can independently resolve their conflict	**.52**	.03	.44
To manage the negotiation between the parties	−.1	**.79**	.16
To be involved in the resolution of the conflict	.04	**.75**	.16
To guide the mediation	.28	**.64**	−.38
To help the parties resolve the conflict	.15	.15	**.82**
	α = .50	α = .57	α = .54

Note. Bold values indicate item loadings for the factors.

parties to resolve their conflict. The next three items loaded on a second factor, which we labeled the *directive* role because the items describe mediators' behaviors of directing the negotiations between the parties, managing the mediation, and guiding the process of mediation. Finally, the last item constitutes a third factor, which we labeled the *general aiding* role because it indicates the general role of a mediator in helping the parties to resolve a conflict.

Criteria for a Successful Mediation

We presented mediators with nine criteria for a successful mediation, and a factor analysis indicated the items loaded on three factors, explaining 67% of the variance (Table 4). As the table indicates, the first five items loaded on the first factor. We labeled this the *relationship* factor, because the five items deal with the relationship between the parties. The next two items loaded on a second factor, which we labeled *process* because both items relate to the mediation process itself. Finally, the last two items loaded on a third factor, which we labeled *agreement* given their focus on achieving consensus.

Results Overview

The results from the four factor analyses are depicted succinctly in Figure 1. Note that it indicates the mediators' cognitions about the overall purpose of mediation loaded on four factors: transformative (mediation transforms disputants by facilitating individual learning and growth), social positive

Table 4
Factor Analysis for the Criteria for a Mediation Success

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
When communication between parties improved	**.85**	.06	−.08
When parties feel that their narrative was acknowledged by the other party	**.79**	.18	−.03
When parties have a good understanding of their interests and those of their counterparts	**.69**	.14	.17
When parties engaged in negotiations	**.68**	.49	.04
When hostility between the parties was reduced	**.64**	.38	−.09
When parties have a better understanding of the different settlement options	.16	**.80**	−.08
When the process was managed professionally	.42	**.64**	.17
When the mediation resulted in a potentially long lasting agreement	.21	−.17	**.87**
Reaching agreement	−.37	.37	**.69**
	α = .84	α = .55	α = .45

Note. Bold values indicate item loadings for the factors.

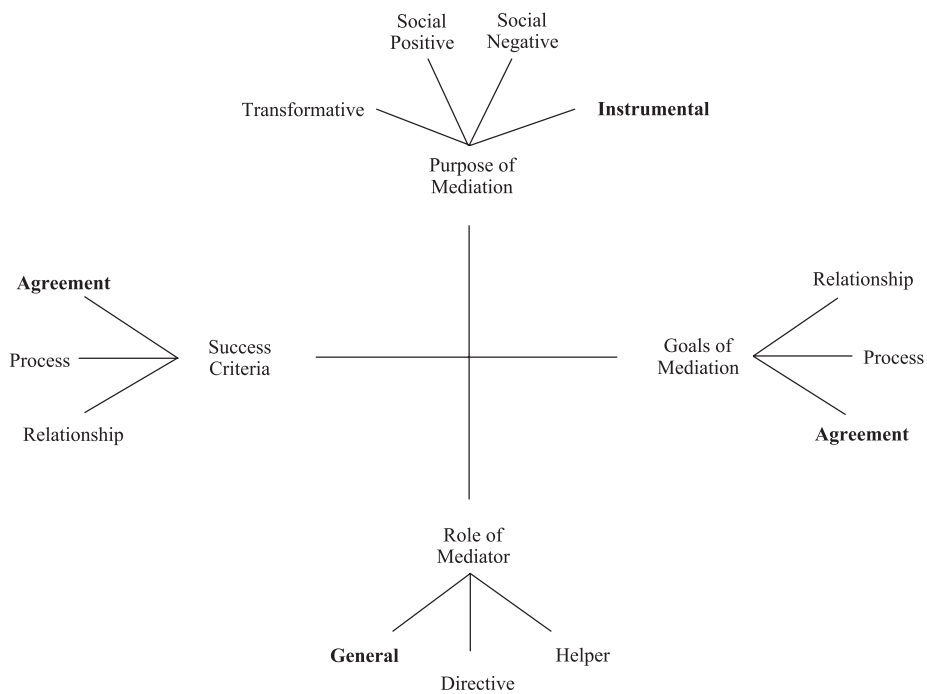

Figure 1. Mediators' cognitive schema.

(mediation is a tool for reducing gaps in society), social negative (mediation increases gaps in society), and instrumental (mediation is a conflict resolution tool).

Mediators' cognitions about the specific goals for mediation loaded on three factors: relationship (improving the parties' relationship), process (providing a formal process for the parties, regardless of its outcomes), and agreement (reaching a settlement).

Mediators' perceptions of their role in mediations loaded on three factors: the helper role (representing mediators' role of helping parties resolve their dispute by means of agreement), the directive role (representing a more proactive role wherein mediators direct the negotiations), and the general role.

Finally, we found three factors that encompass mediators' cognitions regarding criteria for mediation success: improving the relationship between the parties, providing a process to the parties (regardless of the outcome), and reaching agreement.

Facet Importance

Having limned the mediators' role schema, we turned to the relative importance of each facet. (In Figure 1, each primary facet is indicated in bold text.) To calculate the relative importance of these facets, we compared the overall means for the questions loading on one factor (e.g., the first eight items in Table 1, which constituted a transformative purpose of mediation [Table 1]) with the means for the questions loading upon the other factor(s) (e.g., items 7 ["mediation reduces power gaps in society"] and 8 ["mediation empowers individuals by strengthening their self-worth"], which constituted a positive purpose of mediation [Table 1]). The purpose of mediation, we found, was viewed mainly in an instrumental manner—as a tool for resolving disputes by agreement—followed in order by transformative, social-positive, and finally social-negative purposes, $M = 5.21$, $M = 4.62$, $M = 4.03$, $M = 2.24$, respectively; $F(3, 185) = 74.58$, $p < .001$.

As for the goals of mediation, mediators in general viewed reaching agreement as the primary goal of mediation, followed in order by improving the relationship between the parties and providing a process, $M = 5.46$, $M = 4.76$, $M = 4.49$, respectively; $F(2, 186) = 4.14$, $p < .001$.

For the perception of the mediator's role, the data indicate mediators were more apt to favor the general role, followed by the helper role and the directive role, $M = 5.73$, $M = 4.78$, $M = 4.57$, respectively; $F(2, 187) = 111.73$, $p < .001$.

As for the success criterion, mediators considered reaching agreement as most important, followed by improving the disputant relationship and facilitating a process, $M = 5.41$, $M = 4.82$, $M = 4.70$, respectively; $F(2, 186) = 41.07$, $p < .001$.

Relationship with Age, Gender, and Field of Mediation

Having ascertained this initial schema, we investigated its relationship to the mediators' age, gender, and field of mediation.

Mediators' Age

When we examined the relationship between age and the schema facets, we found the older the mediators, the more they considered the main goal of mediation to be agreement ($r = .15$, $p < .05$).

Mediators' Gender

When we considered the relationship between the mediators' gender and the dimensions in their schema, we found a consistent, intuitively appealing, pattern. Female mediators were more apt than male mediators to view mediation as a transformative process, $M = 4.25$ vs. $M = 3.92$, respectively; $F(1, 187) = 26.26$, $p < .001$, and more apt to consider the goal of mediation to be an improvement of the relationship between the parties ($M = 4.84$ vs. $M = 4.27$, respectively; $F = 16.59$, $p < .001$).

Mediators' Field of Mediation

As noted earlier, our research sample included mediators who handled disputes in the fields of family, business, and labor, as well as mediators who practiced across diverse fields. The effects of these fields on the mediators' schema exhibited a pattern wherein the mediators' field of practice influenced their conception of the purpose of mediation and the perceived goal of mediation.

Specifically, the data revealed that mediators who handle community disputes believed more strongly ($M = 4.92$) that the purpose of mediation is transformation than did business ($M = 4.42$), labor

($M = 4.61$), family ($M = 4.66$), or diverse-practice ($M = 4.81$) mediators, $F(4, 184 = 5.88$, $p < .05$. Quite consistently, the community mediators ($M = 4.91$) felt more strongly than did the business ($M = 4.31$), labor ($M = 4.15$), family ($M = 4.47$), or diverse-practice mediators ($M = 4.79$) that an improved relationship was the goal of mediation, $F(3, 185) = 2.94$, $p < .01$.

Finally, and somewhat redundantly with the last factor, the community mediators held more strongly ($M = 5.16$) than did the business ($M = 4.64$), labor ($M = 4.71$), family ($M = 4.88$), or diverse-practice mediators ($M = 4.79$) that the relationship factor was the important success factor, $F(4, 184) = 8.16$, $p < .001$.

Overall Analysis

Returning to Figure 1, we can note that it—along with the underpinning analytic results—indicates some of the dimensions in the schema appear to be related. For example, the success criteria and goals of mediation both include agreement, process, and relationship. Because of this association, we conducted a factor analysis with oblimin rotation on all of the items (Appendix 1).

The results (Table 5) were consistent with the previous findings and consolidate the dimensions. The analysis yielded four factors that explained 62% of the variance. As Table 5 indicates, the first nine items loaded on factor 1; the next 11 items loaded on factor 2; the subsequent 12 loaded on factor 3; and the last six, on factor 4.

The items that loaded on factor 1 (e.g., "to build trust between parties" and "to foster communication between parties"), for the most part, deal with strengthening and improving the relationship between the parties. Consequently, we labeled this factor *improve parties' relationship*.

Turning to factor 2, the items loading on it (e.g., "Mediation helps individuals grow morally" and "Mediation transforms individuals and society as a whole") emphasize the use of mediation to improve individuals and society. Therefore, we labeled it *benefitting parties and society*.

As for factor 3, the items loading on it (e.g., "to help parties understand the different alternatives for resolving the dispute") were a mix of items focusing on improving the interaction between the parties and improving their negotiation capabilities. Given this mix, we labeled this factor *mediation improvement*.

The six items loading on factor 4 (e.g., "To settle the dispute" and "To bring parties to agreement") were clearly oriented toward obtaining an agreement. Therefore, we labeled this factor *agreement*.

Having identified these four dimensions, we examined the relative importance of each. To do so, we calculated and compared the overall means for the items loading on each factor. When making this comparison, we found that the *agreement* factor had the highest score ($M = 5.34$); the *mediation improvement* factor was second ($M = 4.85$); the *improving parties' relationship* factor was next ($M = 4.66$); the *benefiting parties and society* factor was last ($M = 4.54$); and the differences were significant, $F(3, 185) = 6.05$, $p < .001$.

When comparing this four-dimensional schema with the previous 13-faceted one, we can note the parsimony of the four-dimensional one. And there is also a consistency between the two schemata. In both, we find agreement is the primary criterion. Yet the most important contribution of the four-dimensional schema, which was obtained from the overall analysis, stems from its difference from our original archetypes. In study 1, we asked four questions that we felt addressed the major concerns of the mediation community: the purpose of mediation, the goals of mediation, the role of the mediator, and the criteria for success in a mediation. With these archetypes serving as our template, we identified 13 facets in mediators' schema.

An examination of the mediators' responses indicates these four concerns are important to the mediators. Specifically, on a 1–6 scale (Appendix 1), the mediators' average scoring of the *purpose of mediation* questions was 4.22; for the *goals of mediation,* it was 4.78; for the *role of the mediator,* it was 4.91; and for the *success criteria,* it was 4.96.

Table 5
Factor Analysis for All Items

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
To build trust between the parties	**.81**	−.02	.01	.09
To foster communication between the parties	**.81**	.16	−.02	.01
When communication between parties improved	**.71**	.24	.22	−.02
To foster communication between the parties	**.68**	.15	−.02	−.03
To empower the parties	**.66**	.16	.37	−.06
To help build trust between the parties	**.65**	.16	.09	−.03
To change parties' behavior	**.63**	.10	.16	.03
When hostility between the parties was reduced	**.45**	.29	.43	−.04
To create a better society	**.40**	.33	.34	.13
Mediation helps individuals grow morally	.33	**.75**	.11	−.03
Mediation transforms individuals and society as a whole	.03	**.74**	.10	.07
Mediation reduces power gaps in society	.08	**.71**	0.1	.12
Mediation helps people recognize and relate to others' needs	.26	**.68**	−.11	.01
Mediation empowers individuals in their encounters with the system	.01	**.68**	.16	−.10
Mediation is an educational experience	.23	**.65**	.29	−.02
Mediation empowers individuals by strengthening their self-worth	.32	**.60**	.15	−.14
Confidentiality and the lack of monitoring results in exploitation of the weak in mediation	.44	**.59**	.28	−.07
Mediation is a tool for fostering communication between people	.44	**.52**	.01	−.02
Mediation encourages people to stand up for themselves	.25	**.42**	.24	−.11
To create a better society	−.19	**.34**	.27	.20
To help parties understand the different alternatives for resolving the dispute	.03	.17	**.75**	−.05
When parties understand the different alternatives	−.04	.11	**.62**	−.09
To help parties expose their interests	.17	.17	**.56**	.06
When the mediation process was managed in a professional manner	.25	.07	**.55**	.18
To be involved in managing the conflict	.05	.05	**.51**	.18
Mediation is a flexible technique for conflict resolution	−.12	.19	**.48**	.28
When parties negotiated with each other	.45	.24	**.47**	.01
When parties understand their own interests as well as the interests of their counterparts	.43	.18	**.47**	.08
To guide the mediation process	.17	.17	**.46**	.14
When parties feel their narrative was acknowledged	.42	.30	**.44**	−.07
Mediation is a conflict resolution technique	−.32	−.09	**.34**	.23
To give the parties a tool with which they can independently manage their conflict	.21	.16	**.30**	−.15
To solve the dispute	−.07	.08	.01	**.75**
To bring parties to agreement	.08	−.05	−.01	**.73**
Reaching agreement	−.35	.06	.08	**.65**
Reaching a lasting agreement	.19	.19	.01	**.58**
To help parties resolve their conflict	−.01	−.17	.10	**.47**
To foster a negotiation between the parties	.03	−.16	.23	**.45**
	$\alpha = .85$	$\alpha = .77$	$\alpha = .47$	$\alpha = .49$

Note. Bold values indicate item loadings for the factors.

However, while these facets were of importance to the mediators, the underlying archetypes of their schema were different from the original assumed concerns. It was more goal oriented than we had originally thought, with the goals being agreement, improving the parties' relationship, benefiting the parties as well as society, and improving the mediation. The four-faceted schema, we think, should be considered the more accurate template of the mediators' thinking.

Discussion

This article is the first to delineate mediators' cognitive role schema. The first analysis indicates the mediators we studied operate with the structure displayed in Figure 1, which comprises 13 facets that were identified in an analysis of their questionnaire responses. The second and more valid analysis yielded four dimensions or goals: agreement, improvement of the parties' relationship, benefiting the parties as well as society, and improving the mediation process.

What is the value of these findings? The primary contribution is the empirical determination of mediators' schema. Earlier, we reported that three role schemata are reported in the literature—intuitive, identification with a formal model, and idiosyncratic ideas about the nature of conflict, mediation goals, and preferred mediator behaviors—but for the most part, they are not grounded in empirical evidence.

In this article, we provide an empirical grounding, wherein we find the schema is based upon mediators' ideas about the goals—a finding that is quite consistent with Kressel's (2012) reflections. Our findings also underpin a number of hypotheses. Consider that the central premises in schema theory are twofold: first, that a person's observations and experiences shape his or her schema; and second, that the cognitive schema, in turn, influences what phenomena the person attends to in the environment, how he or she processes the selected information, and how he or she chooses—consciously or subconsciously—to behave.

The first premise—that past observations and experience shape a person's schema—permits us to proffer hypotheses about the environment in which our mediators operate, that is, the environment that determined their schema. Because our schema indicates that agreement is of utmost importance, we can conclude that the mediators operate in a society that emphasizes, expects, and rewards agreement.

Just as the mediators' cognitive schema reflects or hints at the environment in which they operate, it also presages how the mediators will behave. One prediction gleaned from our study is that these mediators will strive for agreements and will do so by attempting to improve the mediation process.

Finally, it seems reasonable to predict—from the first analysis—that the female mediators will be more apt to engage in transformative mediation than to press toward agreements. Such a hypothesis is underpinned by the discovery that females consider transformation of relationships as the purpose of mediation, and they believe an improved relationship between the disputants is the goal of mediation. While tentative, these predictions are reasonable and in future studies should be tested with data from the mediators' environment and from observations of their behavior.

Before closing, it is instructive to touch upon a potential weakness as well as an operational question about the study. As for the weakness, we must admit that the development of the schema required considerable judgment as to the questions chosen for the questionnaire and for labeling the factors that emerged from the factor analysis of the 189 mediators' responses. To overcome the subjectivity, we consulted with colleagues who could be more objective, but the risk of subjectivity remains.

Related to the above critique is the operational question as to why a different number of questions were asked to probe the purpose of mediation (16 items), goals of mediation (9 items), etc. The answer is that our objective in the questionnaire was to provide adequate latitude for identifying the facets without generating redundancy. Armed with vivid imaginations and a thick thesaurus, we could have forced ourselves to develop 16 questions for each mode in Figure 1, but the final questionnaire would have been rife with redundant questions. And participants would be less likely to complete such a lengthy questionnaire.

Turning to future research, the first step should be to replicate the current study in individual mediations. For the replication, researchers should ask mediators to answer the questions in Appendix 1 immediately after they have completed a mediation. The current questions will need to be modified appropriately so as to be relevant to a single mediation (e.g., the question, "Mediation helps people recognize and attend to others' needs" would be changed to "This mediation helped the parties to recognize and relate to the others' needs"). Also questions should be included that measure whether or not there was agreement, and the mediators' perceptions of the parties' satisfaction.

The subsequent research avenue is more ambitious as well as exciting. Here, the goals will be to measure the mediators' role schema, the mediators' thinking or understanding of their role, and the relationship of these to the mediators' behavior in various mediations.

In this latter study, the researcher could accompany mediators in their mediations and record their comments as well as those of the disputants. At appropriate times—for example, between individual caucuses—the researcher could ask (and record) the mediators what they are thinking, what they believe is their role at this point (e.g., to reduce A's anger or to convince B to reduce her demand). The observer could also record the disputants' offers, whether or not there is an agreement, and the specific agreement.

In an immediate, subsequent taped interview, the researcher could ask the mediators why they took certain steps in the mediation, their thinking at various points, how they understood their role at these points and in the overall mediation. The interviewer could also ask the mediators the questions from Appendix 1 and probe the thinking behind the mediators' responses.

The researcher's notes from the mediation, the mediators' responses during the mediation, and the interview after the mediation could be transcribed and presented to trained coders. They, in turn, could independently record their evaluations of the mediators' role schema and the mediators' thinking or understanding of their role. Subsequently, researchers could investigate the association between the detected schema, the mediators' thinking about the role, and the mediators' behavior.

In closing, we reiterate our opening supposition. The mediation literature from the past half-century has prodigiously and repeatedly reported the antecedents of mediation, the various mediator behaviors, and the bountiful outcomes of mediation in various disputes. At the core of this valuable mediation process is the mediator, who thinks. This being the case, it seems reasonable and valuable to examine the cognitive template that mediators utilize when they do think. Hopefully, our germinal study has initiated this stream of investigations.

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Appendix 1: Mediator Questionnaire

(1) Rate the degree of your agreement (1 being the lowest degree of agreement and 6 being the highest) with each of the 16 different statements listed below about the purpose of mediation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Mediation is a conflict resolution technique	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Mediation is a flexible technique for conflict resolution	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Mediation is a cost-efficient technique for resolving conflicts	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Mediation is a tool for fostering communication between people	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Mediation is a way of life	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Mediation encourages people to stand up for themselves	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Mediation reduces power gaps in society	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Mediation empowers individuals in their encounters with the system	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Mediation empowers individuals by strengthening their self-worth	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Mediation helps people recognize and relate to others' needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Mediation increases power gaps in society	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Confidentiality and the lack of monitoring results in exploitation of the weak in mediation	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Mediation perpetuates mistreatment of the weaker individuals in society and the overlooking such individuals' achievements	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Mediation is an educational experience	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Mediation helps individuals grow morally	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Mediation transforms individuals and society as a whole	1	2	3	4	5	6

(2) Rate the degree of your agreement (1 being the lowest degree of agreement and 6 being the highest) with each of the nine different statements listed below about the goals of mediation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. To bring parties to agreement	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. To solve the dispute	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. To foster communication between the parties	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix 1
(continued)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
4. To foster trust between the parties	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. To change parties' behavior toward each other	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. To empower the parties	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. To create a better society	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. To help parties expose their interests	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. To help parties understand the different alternatives for resolving the dispute	1	2	3	4	5	6

(3) Rate the degree of your agreement (1 being the lowest degree of agreement and 6 being the highest) with each of the seven different statements listed below about the *role* of the mediator

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. To help parties resolve their conflict	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. To foster communication between the parties	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. To foster a negotiation between the parties	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. To guide the mediation process	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. To give the parties a tool with which they can independently manage their conflict	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. To be involved in managing the conflict	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. To help parties build trust and improve their relationship	1	2	3	4	5	6

(4) Rate the degree of your agreement (1 being the lowest degree of agreement and 6 being the highest) with each of the nine different statements listed below about criteria for a successful mediation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Reaching agreement	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Reaching a lasting agreement	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. When parties understand their own interests as well as the interests of their counterparts	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. When the communication between the parties had improved	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. When parties negotiated with each other	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. When parties feel their narrative was acknowledged	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. When parties understand the different alternatives	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. When the mediation process was managed in a professional manner	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. When the hostility between the parties was reduced	1	2	3	4	5	6

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