

# When experts educate, what do their metaphors say? Complex metaphor structure in the professional conflict resolution literature

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## Abstract

This metaphoric analysis of a quarter-million word corpus of an expert literature (conflict resolution and professional mediation) suggests certain implicit assumptions of the experts and gives us an alternate view of the structure of their thinking. Seven highly conventional metaphors are repeatedly used to frame descriptions and explanations, making a complex subject matter more accessible to learners. They have been reported widely in other literatures and genres and are not particular to the field of expertise covered. These metaphors were found in some instances to oversimplify and mislead, mitigated to a degree when combinations of metaphors reconstituted some of the necessary complexity. The seven principal metaphor source domains found are containers, objects, terrain, seeing/viewing, moving, journeying, and structuring. Evidence of frequent and diverse mappings argues that these are conceptual metaphors, revealing possible thinking patterns. The combining and alternating of metaphors in mutually complementary ways shows an interdependence among the seven metaphors. These naturally occurring conceptual groupings clarify and elaborate meaning in the texts in a way comparable to inheritance hierarchies. The discussion of the results focuses on ways these metaphors both help and hinder understanding of the field in question.

**Key Words:** conceptual metaphor, expert literature, corpus analysis, conflict resolution and mediation.

## Resumen

*Cuando los expertos educan, ¿qué dicen sus metáforas? La estructura de las metáforas complejas en las publicaciones profesionales relativas a la resolución de conflictos*

El presente análisis del uso de la metáfora en un amplio corpus de literatura experta (la resolución de conflictos y la mediación profesional) sugiere que los expertos operan con ciertas presuposiciones implícitas y nos proporcionan otro punto de vista respecto de la estructura de su pensamiento. Se utilizan reiteradamente siete metáforas muy convencionales para plasmar tanto descripciones como explicaciones, y estas metáforas facilitan la comprensión por parte de los no expertos. Las metáforas utilizadas no son exclusivas al campo específico en cuestión. Su uso puede a veces simplificar de manera excesiva e incluso confundir, pero otros factores del discurso en cuestión mitigan estos efectos negativos. La frecuencia de los dominios fuente (recipiente, objetos, terreno, vista, movimiento, viaje y estructura) apuntan a que se trata de metáforas conceptuales que ponen de manifiesto distintos modelos de pensamiento. El corpus muestra una interdependencia entre las siete metáforas y se evalúan las maneras en que facilitan u obstaculizan la comprensión.

**Palabras clave:** metáfora conceptual, literatura de expertos, análisis de corpus, resolución de conflictos y mediación.

## Introduction

An understanding of metaphor is especially important for the literature of a teaching-learning community where experts with extensive experience are imparting their understanding of a complex and abstractly structured subject to learners with less experience. Such professional literature –here that of conflict resolution and mediation<sup>1</sup>– records the experts’ insights, theories, techniques and research so as to develop and refine practices and teach those who are moving forward in their careers. Will the metaphors usefully frame the subject matter, contribute appropriately in explaining its complexity, support or undermine literal statements, enhance learning, oversimplify or mislead?

Conceptual metaphor theory (summarized by Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Kövecses, 2002) is used for theoretical guidance in uncovering the metaphors of this expert discourse. The target domain is the subject or topic being discussed, e.g., a workplace dispute. The source domain is the figurative vehicle, or core conceptual domain, from which new meaning is derived, e.g.,

a building in disrepair. Applying the convention TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN to our example we have: AN EMPLOYMENT DISPUTE IS A BUILDING IN DISREPAIR, which means this workplace dispute is metaphorically understood as a building needing repair.

A token or instance of linguistic metaphor (metaphoric linguistic expression) in the corpus (e.g., “cooperation was *falling apart*”) derived from the source domain is suggestive of a possible conceptual structure. Finding numerous, differently worded tokens from the same source domain (e.g., “...doing the *groundwork* for the project”) extends this structure, increasing confidence that it is conceptual, not simply linguistic. This conceptual structure might be organized hierarchically (Lakoff, 1993) where key concepts consist of multiple conceptual metaphors, in turn represented by tokens (Charteris-Black, 2004) or derive from scenarios, within which are conceptual clusters, in turn composed of tokens (Musolff, 2004). The quantity and variety of tokens found that can be meaningfully grouped into identifiable source domains (Cameron, 2003) will constitute evidence of metaphors that not only structure authors’ language but also their thoughts.

The goal here is to document the conceptual metaphors repeatedly used to describe and explain the target domain –conflict and its resolution– and thereby enhance our understanding of what these particular experts are thinking and saying, discover possible internal inconsistencies, and ask the questions that should lead to better understanding.

## Description of the study

### Method

A corpus of approximately 257,000 words was formed from 34 texts representative of North American mediation experts, chosen per bibliographies and supplemented by nominations solicited from seven authorities in the field. The texts include sections of books of single authorship, articles in edited volumes, professional journals and online resources. Selections focus on definitions of “conflict” and “methods and tasks of the mediator” for the purpose of sharing best practices among experts and between experts and informed laypeople (see Appendix).

The corpus was read beginning to end by the author (who is familiar with such material) so as to: (1) track literal statements and main principles, and

(2) manually find and record the major metaphors by identifying figuratively used words or groups of words, the strictly literal meaning of which is incongruous or outside of the given context of the target domain (Charteris-Black, 2004; Pragglejaz Group, 2007). Software for building concordances<sup>2</sup> was then applied to the results of (2) to search for words and combinations of words representing major metaphors, to verify which instances were actually metaphorical, and to extract examples.

## Results

Results following the overview are compressed into descriptions that feature illustrative examples, typical words or phrases from the corpus (between quotes) with metaphoric words italicized. The number of sub-mappings for each conceptual metaphor group and the diversity of examples for each give evidence of their conceptual nature.

## Overview

While a large variety of different metaphors were found in the corpus, only those documented throughout this paper appear repeatedly. These are found in seven conceptual groups (see Figure 1) and are described in terms of the constituent sub-domain mappings of each.

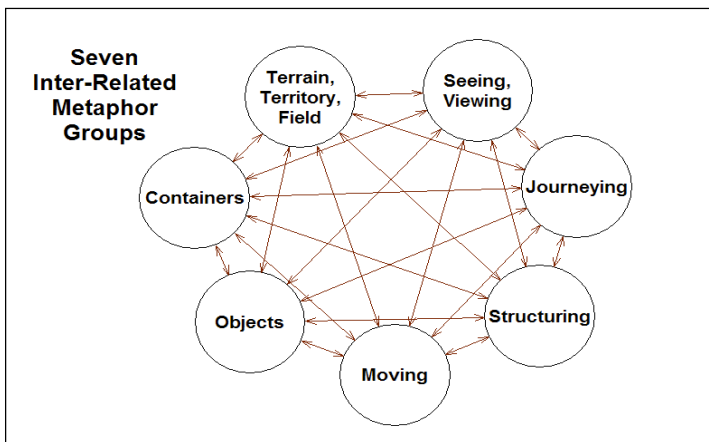


Figure 1. Conceptual metaphors in conflict resolution and mediation.

## CONTAINER metaphors

Throughout the corpus, the metaphoric understanding that conflict itself is a container is illustrated in expressions such as how we “get *into* conflict” and want to “*extricate*” ourselves from it; this corresponds to the conventional metaphor DIFFICULTIES ARE CONTAINERS documented elsewhere (Lakoff, 1994).

Part of our conventional knowledge of the source domain of CONTAINER is that it includes surfaces –sides, walls or membranes that keep some things in and others out. Boundaries may be transparent, porous, opaque, sealed or partially open. Opening and closure are implicit. Objects or substances that move in or out, get stuck, spill, may go in one opening and out another, or may be prodded or dug out. Containers have depth and what is deep inside is harder to see than what is accessible at the surface. A simple word or phrase evokes a “container” domain fully pre-structured with these elements, relations and logic that, in turn, are mapped back on the subject being discussed. A thorough search of the corpus for sub-domain mappings of CONTAINER revealed the following as conceptual in nature:

CONFLICT IS A CONTAINER: “the amount of emotional energy he or she continues to *put into* the conflict” which is “*deep*”, and into which one may “*inject reality*,” “*closure prematurely*” can inhibit being “*more open*” later on.

THE RESOLUTION OF A CONFLICT IS A CONTAINER: “proposals that *contain* a variety of solutions to satisfy another’s interests” leave “*room for movement*”.

DISPUTANTS ARE CONTAINERS: “The stepmother (...) was unable to *contain* herself” may be understood metaphorically to mean feelings, thoughts and needs are inside her; the container walls are perhaps “*hiding interests*”. Mediators “*mine*” what is “*below the surface*” and this “*opens* the way to a solution”. The corpus material further suggests these containers have space where one might see oneself and a revised view of the other.

MEDIATION IS A CONTAINER: “developing *room within* which to negotiate”. This sub-mapping benefits from the literal entailment of a physical room in which mediation takes place, extending it metaphorically to mental “*space*” for working on the conflict, and to develop a “safe and respectful *atmosphere*” in which there might be sufficient “*bargaining range*”. Interestingly, the CONTAINER qualities projected on disputants are

generally restrictive, while those projected on mediation seem more liberating.

How does it help us to understand the mediation process in “container” terms? To some degree the metaphoric containers are one within another—containers within containers— attracting our attention in turn or simultaneously. They correspond to concepts and categories used to describe and think about conflict and the mediation process. The name of a concept (e.g., “bargaining space”) is a container and its contents (e.g., money, fairness, needs, rights) are the attributes of that concept. The metaphor organizes qualitatively different aspects of the subject material into more universally understood entities in space.

Note the experts’ literal use of the concept of container and observe how they adapt it for dual literal and metaphoric use, finally making it entirely metaphorical. The corpus gives frequent examples where the expert mediators speak literally about the mediation venue, sometimes referring to its furnishings, physical arrangements, and then metaphorically (as shown above) about its “atmosphere”. “Room within which to negotiate” is literally the physical space, just as “bargaining range” is quantity of money; metaphorically they are “the *boundaries* of the discussion” within which “uncertainty exists” leaving “*room* for movement”, that is, mental space to think about and make settlement offers. With such extensions of the CONTAINER metaphor the experts oversimplify, provisionally allowing apprentice mediators to live by this metaphor long enough to gain real-life conflict resolution experience. Other metaphors will necessarily be introduced, as we shall see below, but keeping the terms of the CONTAINER metaphor close at hand can afford thematic continuity.

## OBJECTS metaphors

Containers entail material contents or objects. These objects may be hard or soft, dense or light, slippery or sticky and substances not easily moved. Our everyday experience tells us objects can be seen or otherwise separately sensed. These source domain features promote the conceptualization that whatever we understand to be objects are separable, handleable, manipulable with tools. We can observe, classify, count, and measure them, move and even reshape them to fit together, and choose which ones to use in

constructing something. The four sub-domains of the OBJECTS metaphor and their mappings illustrate this:

PROCESSES ARE OBJECTS: Mediators use “a ‘*tool*’ box’ of techniques” to assure “option-generation” that produces “the *contents* of an acceptable solution” depending on what a conflict “*consists of*”.

These metaphors are found in the discussions of conflict resolution processes, which in fact are dynamic, interdependent sequences. By using OBJECTS metaphors these processes are conceptualized as objects –independent and readily separable.

COMPLEX INFORMATION AND EMOTION ARE SEPARATE, SORTABLE OBJECTS: “A mediator can *separate* the people *from* the problem” including “factual and emotional information (...) *sorted* and *organized*” that “*separate* inventing *from* decision-making” and “compromise *among* conflicting needs”.

PARTS OF A CONFLICT ARE MANIPULABLE OBJECTS IN THE HAND: “...give him a *freer hand* in the negotiation” to maneuver “goals and interests (...) in the situation *at hand*”, and also “*pass on* (...) ideas and strategies”.

The PROCESSES ARE OBJECTS metaphor identified above resembles what Halliday (1985) and others call grammatical metaphors (summarized by Plementitaš, 1998) –when verb phrases describing processes become transformed into nouns or noun-like phrases. With this “objectification”, rather than narrating how various processes interact, experts may simply list the processes as nouns (or objects). Dynamic processes then take on attributes of static objects. Fewer words are needed which aids memory; events are seemingly disentangled into discrete, additive components, no longer interdependent, but readily reconfigured, deleted, or substituted.

Metaphors of CONTAINERS and OBJECTS (for example, emotions are put in containers separately from facts) operate in parallel to make a complex process seem simpler. But this inadvertent stripping out of complexity could be harmfully misleading. The following section reports metaphors that (intentionally or not) restore key distinctions using relative locations, connections, and links, reconstituting key dynamics that make a process work.

## TERRAIN metaphors

Terrains and landscapes have properties additional to the spatial aspects of containers, such as (starting) points and locations, directions, destinations, gradients, paths and relative distances between locations. Objects are often in motion, requiring a gradated space to locate positions and measure distances. The sub-domain mappings of TERRAIN can do this, starting to reconstitute the relationships in a complex process not provided by CONTAINER and OBJECTS alone.

CONFLICT IS A TERRAIN: “parties (...) have *reached* a *field* in which any settlement is preferable”, “the mediator who is familiar with the *rugged terrain* (...) accompanying parties *through* their conflict” to “a *field* of options”.

MEDIATION IS A TERRAIN: “mediators carry an internal ‘*map*’ that gives them a sense of familiarity with the general *terrain*” revealing the line connecting their “*positions*” and “at this *point* participants have to decide”.

TERRAIN metaphors explain the relative positions of needs, feelings, and arguments, and how close disputants might be to settlement. The above examples of TERRAIN locate conflicting positions and underlying needs in two or three dimensions, refer to their relative proximity, and conceive estimates and comparisons of spatial differences.

A chief implication of “terrain” is that it can be mapped. Experts in this corpus frequently use maps and mapping to speak of how people think. But any map user will know how maps mislead in numerous ways, being based on assumptions such as a fixed point of view, collapsing of multiple dimensions, and a consistent metric. To project land maps to the idea of maps of knowledge requires more. The notions of direction and relative distance, just found in TERRAIN, could be extended using the enhancements of real cartographers, such as topological representations to extend the idea of distance from two to three dimensions, map overlays showing additional dimensions to project multiple attributes of locations and possible obstacles, and contours that depict paths of greater or less resistance.

But resolving a conflict necessitates finding things that have so far not been apparent and other metaphors are needed to describe and explain how this “finding” is done.



## Metaphors of SEEING, VIEWING and SEARCHING

A dominant way of experiencing terrain is with the sense of vision –an extremely rich and widely used source domain. The conventional metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) is exemplified in ubiquitous substitutions of “see” for “know” or “understand” in common parlance.

SEEING entails integral factors that build upon CONTAINERS, OBJECTS and TERRAIN already discussed. The metaphors from this corpus suggest variations on the conventional metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING, namely, THINKING IS VIEWING, THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING IS VIEWING SOMETHING, and LEARNING IS VISUALLY SEARCHING.

We view movement and action before us. When we are in motion the process is extended as we view stationary objects sequentially. Strung together, these make the visual experience of objects in space a metaphoric vehicle for mental or imaginary activity. The physical act of seeing composes sequential fields of vision (terrains) using orientation, focus, angle, frame, approach, point of view, and clarity of view, to provide a metaphorical understanding of thinking. Here the sub-domain mappings found in the present corpus extend and elaborate the THINKING IS VIEWING metaphors just proposed.

THINKING IN A CERTAIN WAY IS VIEWING FROM A CERTAIN POINT, APPROACH OR ORIENTATION: “it is ultimately the reality as each side *sees* it that constitutes the problem in a negotiation”. People, when unchanging in their thinking are said to be fixed in their “*point of view*”. This implies distinct locations “*from*” which they “*approach*” issues, “*superficially or in great depth*”, whether “*illuminated*”, “*clear*”, and “*in full view*”, or “*hidden (...)* *disguised*”.

POINTS IN THINKING ARE POINTS FOCUSED UPON; SCOPE OF THINKING IS SCOPE OF VISION: “define the *scope* of the problem” and then “*focusing on* the issues”, “*concentrate on*” what “served as the *focal point*”, “helping the parties *notice*” what is useful in resolving conflict.

RESOLVING CONFLICT IS CHANGING ORIENTATION: “disputants have to *alter their approach* to the conflict” by choosing “*where* you sit”, stepping “*in their shoes*”, looking through different “*lenses*”. To see a conflict differently is to “*frame each issue*” differently, to “*look behind* opposed

*positions*”, “*under those feelings*”, “*beyond*” the dispute”, “*where you would like to go rather than about where you have come from*”.

RESOLVING CONFLICT IS SEARCHING: The “mediator is (...) helping parties *search for an outcome*” in “*a field full of opportunities*”, having “*found*” where a “*creative or healing solution*” exits.

Thinking is believed to be central to conflict, and changed thinking leads to resolution of conflict (Gelfand & McCusker, 2001). But expert mediators, like most people, conceive of thinking metaphorically as seeing, as described above. Mediators encourage disputants to search the terrain of the conflict, which sometimes is also suggested to be the terrain of the resolution, to find the proper combination of disputants’ needs, interests, options, and opportunities. New or changed thinking that might resolve conflict is metaphorically understood as searching, clearing, clarifying vision.

The corpus contains literal descriptions of how disputants are asked to turn from facing each other, re-seat themselves side by side and look forward to the table where related documents lay, an easel or writing board with notes –which stand both literally and figuratively for their dispute: “He could not force Sharon to *face reality*” (...) but he could help her to *look at* their options”. The disputants may literally attend to these but, equally important, they gaze at the open space and bare surfaces in front of them where thoughts might metaphorically be projected, ideas formed and solutions explored. Rather than focusing on each other, they now turn to the terrain as a workspace where things can be located and constructed.

VISION can be combined with TERRAIN to locate conflict and solutions in a bounded space, making a metaphorical map of what is thought. For example, VISION and TERRAIN together allow one to adjust focus on different points, metaphorically to change one’s thinking. These metaphors gain additional explanatory power when linked to metaphors of bodily movement.

## Metaphors of MOVING

Expert mediators in this corpus repeatedly refer to conflict and conflict resolution as involving movement of needs, interests, emotions, thoughts, histories, behaviors, procedures, mediators and the disputants themselves –all metaphorically understood as OBJECTS (see above). The generic name

for this metaphor might be CONFLICT IS OBJECTS MOVING IN OPPOSITION TO EACH OTHER, or EXPERIENCE IS MOVEMENT and EXPERIENCE OF CONFLICT IS OBJECTS MOVING IN OPPOSITION: “disagreements arise out of *clashing* assumptions”, “*divergent*” objects that “*oppose*” or “*block*” one another.

Conflictual emotion is discussed as a hot, pressurized substance contained within an individual. It “fuels conflict”, “*spilling over*” so as to “*permeate*” issues, requiring care to “*express and release*” or to “*let an emotion out*”. Conflictual thought is talked about as largely unmoving, contained as “*rigid*”, “*entrenched perceptions*”, “*deeply held beliefs*”, that disputants “*cling to*” so as not “to *upset* their sense of themselves and their world”. Conflictual behavior moves so as to be “*directed against*” others and create “*impasses*”, or it goes to “the *brink*”, necessitating a “*shift*” or “*moving away*” from difficulties “*toward the new*”. It must be “*moved into an acceptable range*” or “the boundaries *within which*” agreements may occur.

If conflict is emotions, thoughts and behavior, all of which are metaphorically understood as objects in oppositional motion, then mediation is the process of altering this motion. A generic metaphor typically organizes our understanding of such processes: an agent exerts some degree of force to move an affected entity (described by Lakoff & Johnson (1999) as the “EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor”). In turn, this gives rise to the overall metaphor CAUSE IS MOVEMENT, for which a number of sub-domain mappings found in this corpus are now described.

INTERESTS ARE FORCES (STRONG INTERESTS ARE STRONG FORCES): The term “interest” is very frequently used in the expert literature on mediation. Its meaning is specialized, referring to what disputants truly want, compared with their demands or positions. One of many examples in this corpus is “Interests *motivate* people; they are the silent *movers behind* the hubbub of positions. Your position is something you have decided upon. Your interests are what caused you to so decide”.

NEEDS ARE FORCES MOVING OBJECTS IN A DEEP CONTAINER: Another very popular term in this corpus, “needs”, is defined as “*deeper levels* of interests”, “concerns which *motivate* all people”. As with “interests”, “needs” refer literally to complex and dynamic social psychological and perhaps neurophysiological processes but are metaphorically understood as physical objects in motion. Most often needs are depicted as something located or contained at some depth: “Needs

should be discussed at a *deep enough level* that the real *forces driving* the conflict can be addressed”.

**MEDIATORS ARE FORCES THAT MOVE THINGS:** Mediators, very prevalently in this literature, “*move them [disputants] toward* an option that might *meet* more of their interests”, “*move* the resolution process *forward*”, “*through* a difficult conflict process” at “whatever *pace* the parties set”, “*shifting*” as necessary “to help parties *to progress*” despite “what is *blocking* people from *moving forward*”. Degrees of force are implied when the mediator uses “persistent *prodding*”, “*probing*”, a “*nudge*” or “*push*”, sometimes “*pressing them hard*”, “*banging* their heads together or *twisting* their arms”. Yet with this proviso: “True change cannot be *forced*, so the mediator will only *support* the parties’ *efforts* and help *open doors* for them ...”.

**DISPUTANTS ARE FORCES THAT MOVE THINGS:** As negotiators they “*move beyond* old ways”, “*forward*”, yet with “*cycles of moving toward and away* from agreements as parties *wrestle* with feelings”.

By using so many metaphors of movement, conflict resolution experts are describing (in addition to their more literal statements) the diversity of “movers” –emotions, interests, needs, mediators, and the disputants, themselves– and how some movements are conceived as manifestations of conflict and others as agents of conflict resolution. The patterns of movement may seem confusing, for example, when the affected entity –the object moved– later becomes the agent or mover. But this is also realistic because conflict is a dynamical process (Coleman et al., 2006) in which results of action at one moment become the cause of action later.

How do mediators “move” in such a way as to resolve conflict? This literature instructs mediators literally not to direct or compel the terms of dispute settlement. The experts make literal statements to the effect that settlement terms are to be voluntarily determined by the disputants themselves, and later employ conceptual metaphors such as **NEEDS ARE FORCES MOVING OBJECTS IN A DEEP CONTAINER** and **DISPUTANTS ARE FORCES THAT MOVE THINGS**. Experienced mediators, nonetheless, know they can influence whether settlement is achieved and on what terms. This is evident in the broad use of metaphors found in the corpus, such as **MEDIATORS ARE FORCES THAT MOVE THINGS**. Despite literal descriptions purporting subtle, facilitative actions and the importance of disputants’ self-motivation, the potent bodily movement metaphors occur repeatedly and imply the use of greater

strength. These conceptual metaphors may well persuade readers that mediation should be more directive than literally stated.

MOVING, combined with TERRAIN and SEEING, form a kind of mental space or territory where retrospective and prospective action can be conceived. Needs and interests are metaphorically understood as moving, and thus changing, a disputant's position in a conflict. Issues and attitudes move disputants to positions or through impasses, while mediators move disputants through the conflict resolution process to options and alternatives. These locations are seldom very specifically pinpointed on the metaphoric terrain of the conflict resolution task. Perhaps, then, the terrain is not specifically enough defined, in combination with the metaphors of moving, to produce a description of the results of such movement.

MOVING includes an implicit pattern of starting from an initial location, proceeding along a path, and heading for a destination. This has been referred to in the literature of conceptual metaphor as a source-path-goal schema (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). We shall now see how journey metaphors potentially give this schema enough specificity to conceive action fully.

## Metaphors of JOURNEYING

The “EVENT STRUCTURE metaphor” already mentioned (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) can reveal important elements in the discourse studied here. This skeletal structure, abstracted from universal experience of bodily movement, is key to conventional understanding of causality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Gibbs, 2006) and forms the basis of a journey. Starting and continuing step-by-step on a path involves intermediate, mappable locations in some known proximity to each other, progressing to a destination or goal at the end. Obstacles or divergences from this route mean difficulty in reaching the destination. Such “common sense” gives an implicit inference structure to JOURNEY and prompts us to expect its constituent elements. Mediators or disputants invoke JOURNEY whenever they discuss where they have been, what they seek, extreme positions taken, various ways to reach their objectives, the lengths they must go, and the like.

Review of the text examples cited above regarding OBJECT, CONTAINER, VIEWING, TERRAIN and MOVING reveals elements of a JOURNEY; it largely “sums up” the others. The story of a conflict or an

account of the mediation process can readily be understood metaphorically as a journey, as shown by the mappings below.

**MEDIATION IS A GUIDED JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY:** As a special case of journeying, this self-propelled process emphasizes “*exploring*” paths to take; “mediation enables parties to *move in one direction* for awhile, then *backtrack and retrace their steps*, reconsider where they see themselves *heading* and then *move forward* again in a slightly *different (...) direction*”. “Mediators (...), *following* the parties as they *move through* their conflict *journey*”, “*guided* the process”, “telling them *what to look out for*”, “what that *route* looks like”. More directive mediators “whose *mission* is *arriving* at a settlement” make sure that the “negotiations are *plotted*”, producing “a conceptual *road map*” that narrows the “*discovering*” of a destination.

**MEDIATION IS FINDING, FOLLOWING A PATH:** A dilemma for inexperienced mediators and for disputants, given that each conflict requires its own path to resolution, is “looking for the right *path*”, “*taking those steps*”, “working *through*” to the “constructive *path*”. Other paths can be “*dead ends*”, “may produce *deadlock*” so it is important not to have “*traveled so far down*” the wrong one that it is impossible to “*reverse to another path*”, or “*broaden one’s focus*”, to “*steer*” disputants “*toward the wide (...) world*”.

**SURMOUNTING DIFFICULTIES IN MEDIATION IS BYPASSING OBSTACLES:** What if there is a “*setback* in their *progress*?” “The art of dealing with conflict often lies in *finding the narrow path between*” obstacles or evading a “*roadblock in the path* of the parties as they struggle to (...) *move on*”. This includes what “helps the parties *get past* the emotion of the dispute”. “Many (...) *lurch from impasse to impasse*, and few (...) *follow a straightforward path* to resolution”, “*paths are opened*” then “become *narrower (...)* without such *narrowing*, *closure* is very difficult”.

**QUITTING MEDIATION IS ABANDONING THE SEARCH:** Despite such trials on the journey, mediators “need to... not *abandon* it when the *going gets tough*”. Should they, “to achieve a settlement”, “*abandon the search* for [self-directed] resolution and *pursue*” a more legalistic approach (e.g., modeled on court procedures) the journey is no longer one of discovery, but of travel to a pre-determined end.

One begins the metaphoric conflict resolution journey with a dispute and ends at a resolution or a place affording a different perspective. Disputants more or less actively choose their route and take multiple steps, not getting very far without maneuvering around impasses or finding alternative

pathways. A mediator can serve as a guide who frequently travels similar routes and can offer help along the way, but does not make the trip for the travelers. Or, the mediator may actually draw the map and then pull or push the disputants along the selected route.

## Metaphors of STRUCTURING

We have seen that TERRAIN metaphors imply a JOURNEY covering the figurative territory of conflict and that of the mediation process. The mental terrain can be established as a virtual map. VISION provides various ways to conceive the terrain that is traveled. MOVING portrays the contents of the conflict terrain as objects in contrary motion, and searching among these objects entails the motive force of disputants, mediators and their attitudes. In the text examples of JOURNEY just given above, we find more specificity regarding starting point, relationship of intervening locations, short and long-term destinations chosen, obstacles on the path, and the guide's (mediator's) role. A path is not a straight trajectory but the back-and-forth of discovery so important to the conflict resolution experts of this corpus. Now we find metaphors of STRUCTURING that describe the results at the end of the journey. Building on all of the other metaphors, STRUCTURING as used by these experts significantly reconstitutes the meaning of their discourse that the earlier metaphors, if used alone, would abridge and fragment.

RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT IS SELECTING, ASSEMBLING PIECES: Not only must disputants and mediators “*collect* relevant information” but “*pick* the one or two items... of greatest importance” that might be “*assembled*” to form a resolution of the conflict. Successful agreement depends on proper assembly of pieces, “*integrating* these approaches” so “they are *parallel* (...) and mutually *reinforcing*”.

ENDURING AGREEMENT IS BUILDING ON A GOOD FOUNDATION: One must “begin with the *underlying basis*” that is “*central* to the mediation” so as to “*lay the groundwork*”, “*lay a foundation* of agreed-upon facts *upon* which a principled solution can be *built*”.

ENDURING AGREEMENT IS PHYSICAL SOLIDITY: To “*construct*” “the *strongest* agreement possible”, a “*solid* (...) *fundamentally sound* agreement”, one must “be *firm*, be principled yet *flexible*”. For this the process itself must be properly assembled –with mediators “*matching* their ‘style’ to the parties’

needs” and “*fitting* the forum to the fuss” so that a proposal “*fits* their own needs”, “*dovetailing*” to create a solid joining to “*bedrock* concerns” on “cognitive, emotional, and behavioral *dimensions* [that will] *reinforce* one another”. This is accomplished through proper “conflict resolution *design*”, a “conceptual *plan*” using “*building blocks*” and attending to “the *form* of settlement options (...) while *tailoring* it to their (...) needs” so that all elements are sturdily integrated.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION and ARCHITECTURE are the source domains for these structuring metaphors –physical activities using mechanical principles–and they are projected onto target domains of mental and verbal activities that the experts are explaining. Found here are several entailments of STRUCTURING, including planning and design, building standards, matching, measuring, fitting pieces together to build solidly on a strong foundation.

## Discussion

Evidence is presented of conceptual metaphors in a particular field of expert literature. These are not metaphors introduced for occasional heuristic or ornamental purposes but are salient in the experts’ cognitions by virtue of their frequency and diversity. Seven conceptual groups were found, each with two to five sub-domains which, in turn, contained numerous instances or tokens. The metaphors appear repeatedly and systematically throughout the texts and project the conventionally understood, concrete, physical qualities of containers, objects, traveling, building construction, and so forth onto the target domains of central interest to the experts.

These target domains (conflict and mediation) are in fact very complex and probably operate literally according to principles of neuroscience, psychology and sociology –disciplines not necessarily well known to readers of these texts. The wide scope (Kövecses, 2002; Semino, 2005) of the metaphors found, in that they are used for a variety of target domains, means they are well known to almost everyone as evidenced by the wide range of English language discourse in which they occur (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Kövecses, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Charteris-Black, 2004; Musolff, 2004; Richardt, 2005; Semino, 2005). These common, easily understood metaphors simplify the target domain –the subject matter to be learned from the expert literature– making it more accessible to learners and promoting



understanding of complex processes they have yet to experience fully themselves.

The metaphors are not put forth by the experts as pedagogical or theory-constituent metaphors (Sticht, 1993; Steinhart, 2001). Nevertheless as learners increasingly participate, putting the terminology and associated ideas to practical use, vocabulary, including the metaphors, would be expected to influence their thinking and help manage the differences between what the experts are explaining and what the learners comprehend (Cameron, 2003). However, while facilitating learning, it was noted that some of the metaphor applications reported here are oversimplifications, such as when complex, interdependent processes are metaphorically depicted as unconnected objects. This is misleading, contradictory (Musolff, 2004), and can put learners in the epistemic quandary of taking the figurative as literal (Sundlöf et al., 2003).

Presumably the experts themselves would neither claim to believe their metaphors literally nor necessarily subscribe to their implicit assumptions and inference patterns (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Yet they may actually think along these simplified lines to the extent they use the metaphors unconsciously. Dual literal and metaphoric use of certain terms could compound this. We have seen, for example, how the room in which the target activity (mediation) literally takes place is juxtaposed with psychological space, becoming metaphorically a negotiation “space” with “bargaining range”. Literal entailments can heighten saliency of figurative meanings, blurring source and target domain boundaries, making a metaphor seem more natural and its figurative entailments more certain (Semino, 2006).

However, this study has also reported observations of metaphor that seem to counteract fragmentation, oversimplification, and confusion. Rather than depending on inheritance hierarchies (Lakoff, 1993) they are structurally interdependent, creating coherent meaning through complimentary interaction. Illustrations given earlier show how certain metaphors join together, such as MOVING and TERRAIN, to summarize multifaceted concepts, provide global coherence (Kupferberg & Green, 2005) and restore complexity.

While experts normally combine and alternate these metaphors naturally and without calculation, conceivably they could enhance their discourse by doing so deliberately, just as metaphors can be extended to beneficial effect (Lakoff

& Turner, 1989; Müller, 2005) to project clearer and more accurate conceptualization of target material (Smith, 2005). Such enrichment of the resulting terminology would be passed on to learners, affording them expanded ways to participate and contribute.

This suggests that authors of professional texts such as those studied here would benefit by taking conceptual metaphor consciously into account (Charteris-Black, 2004), deploying metaphors separately and in combination to better enable learners to comprehend their professional subject matter. Examples were given earlier showing how TERRAIN metaphors might be extended using actual cartographic enhancements such as topology and overlays. Further extensions are possible by combining VISION plus TERRAIN to suggest the metaphorical idea of focus that is adjustable to suit changing distances, spaces, and locations. The metaphor-aware expert could compensate for over-simplifications and distortions while further exploiting metaphoric potency to extend discussions, perhaps making deliberate use of the entire network of the seven interrelated conceptual metaphor clusters found here.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> First professionalized in North America, the practices of mediation and negotiation to resolve conflict are now widely studied and applied in such areas as business, politics, government, community, and family relations. Negotiation is when parties or disputants deliberately communicate in order to resolve a conflict mutually. Mediation occurs when a neutral third party facilitates the negotiation process.

<sup>2</sup> "Concordance" version 3.2, R.J.C. Watt.

## Appendix

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