Mediation has developed into an established discipline consisting of a variety of tactics that may be employed when intervening in different types of conflicts. One particular type of conflict that has been identified as difficult, if not impossible, to resolve is value conflicts. Research dedicated to developing interventions aimed at resolving value-based disputes is limited. To address this gap between research and practice, we interviewed professional mediators to gain insight into the techniques employed when intervening in value conflicts. This preliminary exploratory study resulted in several propositions. The analysis of the transcripts is presented, and plans for future research are discussed.

A mediator was called to assist in a dispute between neighbors. The gentleman next door had been complaining about loud noise persisting through late hours of the night. His neighbors, a married couple, were not responding to his requests to “keep it down.” The mediator listened to both sides of the story. As the parties exchanged their views, the conflict became less about noise disturbance and more about their diverging values. It seemed the gentleman next door was not only complaining about noise disturbance but was in fact reporting a case of physical abuse. He wanted to put an end to the beatings that his female neighbor had been undergoing by the hands of her spouse. In his country, this was not a common practice, but where his neighbors come from, women have a different role. The neighbors differed in cultural beliefs about gender equality. The gentleman wanted justice for his female neighbor, who in turn preferred the gentleman to remain uninvolved. As for her husband, participating in mediation could not be further from his interests. With ideological differences
at the center of the mediation table, the mediator is faced with a classical case of a value conflict.

Mediation is defined as a form of intervening in conflicts where a neutral independent expert guides the communication and negotiations between parties in order to reach agreements about desired behaviors and a mutually beneficial optimal solution, both based on parties' actual interests (Brenninkmeijer 2009). Parties who find themselves in an escalated conflict may opt for the assistance of a professional mediator. In general, mediators are equipped to intervene in different types of conflicts. One specific type of conflict that has been identified as particularly difficult, if not impossible, to resolve are those involving diverging values (Prein 2009). Value conflicts occur when people disagree on an issue due to the different values that they hold dear (Druckman, Rozelle, and Zechmeister 1977). An example of such a conflict is illustrated in the anecdote, from actual experience, at the start of the article. Here, a mediator was asked to intervene in a dispute involving the value of gender equality. By guiding the parties through the structural process of the four phases of intake, exploration, negotiation, and documenting the agreement (Brenninkmeijer, 2009), the mediator may assist the parties in resolving this dispute. However, the manner in which practitioners guide parties from the intake to the agreement phase in any conflict is far from uniform. With approximately twenty-five identified mediation styles (Kressel and Wall 2012) and more than one hundred mediator tactics (Wall 1981), experts may choose to intervene in value conflicts in a variety of ways. The question is: Do parties in a value conflict effectively respond to the numerous interventions, or are there specific techniques that may be particularly productive or counter-productive in fostering resolution when mediating value conflicts?

The preliminary research we explore in this article forms part of a larger project aimed at verifying and, where necessary, designing sustainable interventions that can be adopted by professional mediators when encountering value conflicts. The lack of systematic procedures to intervene in value conflicts may result in trial-and-error approaches to the point where solutions may seem to be more rooted in luck rather than the result of carefully diagnosed conflicts. By first interviewing professional mediators in the field, we aim to gain insight into the mechanisms involved in the development, escalation, and resolution of value conflicts. The objective of this study is to document mediators' experienced results of employing mediation techniques when intervening in value conflicts. Based on the findings, we seek to conduct empirical studies to further identify techniques that are
likely to function productively (or counterproductively) when employed in value conflicts.

Value Conflicts

One of the main reasons value conflicts are particularly difficult to resolve is rooted in the nature of the issues discussed in value-based disputes. Values communicate our principles and beliefs about how we think the world should be. These principles represent who we are as people (Wade-Benzoni et al. 2002). Encountering people with different values may threaten our self-identities (Kouzakova et al. 2012; Wade-Benzoni et al. 2002), thereby producing higher levels of distancing (Skitka, Bauman, and Sargsis 2005), intolerance, and egocentrism (Wright, Cullum, and Schwab 2008), which will lead to more competitive rather than cooperative attitudes (Hinds and Mortensen 2005). Furthermore, parties in a value conflict tend to be less encouraged to seek win-win opportunities (Harinck, De Dreu, and Van Vianen 2000), are more likely to expect zero-sum outcomes (Rapoport 1964), and often view classical conflict solutions such as trade-offs and compromises as unacceptable (Druckman et al. 1977; Harinck et al. 2000; Harinck and De Dreu 2004; Tetlock et al. 2000; Wade-Benzoni et al. 2002). These mechanisms separate value conflicts from other types of conflicts (e.g., disputes about material possession) and may require tailored techniques to foster resolution.

Previous research investigating techniques specifically geared to resolving value conflicts have produced three types of interventions that may be particularly effective in mediating such cases. First, asking parties to affirm their counterpart by recalling positive characteristics about the other has been shown to increase shared identity. This so-called other-affirmation technique allows parties to view their counterparts as part of their self-concept, which in turn improved conflict-handling strategies (Rexwinkel, Ellemers, and Harinck 2011). Second, deemphasizing values and emphasizing interests in an objectively similar disagreement has been shown to decrease parties' feelings of self-involvement and increase perceptions of common ground (Kouzakova et al. 2012). Similarly, requesting parties to discuss their conflicting values during a prenegotiation workshop prior to the negotiation session has been shown to disentangle the resource from the value aspect of the conflict, thereby facilitating the negotiation process (Druckman, Broome, and Korper 1988; Druckman and Zechmeister 1970, 1973; Druckman et al. 1977; Korper, Druckman, and Broome 1986).
With the exception of these interventions, the development of techniques specifically geared at resolving value conflicts has received little attention in academia. Moreover, research empirically verifying the efficacy of techniques currently employed when intervening in value conflicts is also lacking. The discrepancy between the literature of the mediation of value conflicts and the practice of mediating value conflicts is evident. The research examined here forms a first step in addressing this gap.

**Study Rationale**

The study we report is of an exploratory nature. Since little is known about the mechanisms involved in the development, escalation, and, especially, resolution of value conflicts, we were mainly interested in gaining insight into these procedures in order to extend our own understanding beyond theoretical inferences. By interviewing professional mediators in the field, we obtained accounts of mediators’ experiences with specific techniques when intervening in value conflicts.

Prior to summarizing our research question, however, it is important to address the difference between the theoretical distinction and the practical existence of value conflicts. In theory, value conflicts refer to disputes that exclusively involve diverging views. In practice, however, conflicts are often mixed (Druckman and Zechmeister 1970; Druckman et al. 1988); conflicts about resources such as money, for example, can include value-related beliefs about the right way of distributing the money. To illustrate the interplay between value conflicts and more resource-based disputes, Druckman and colleagues (1977) envision a continuum ranging from pure conflict of resources on one extreme to pure conflict of values on the other extreme, with varying degrees of conflict in between. In this study, we sought to explore practitioners’ experiences with conflicts where values played a more predominant role than resources. By posing key questions, we hoped to generate rich descriptions allowing us to separate the resources from the values and clearly distinguish between techniques employed to address the value aspects of the dispute.

By focusing on strategies used to manage value conflicts, we aimed to depict a practical overview of conflict management with respect to value conflicts. With the research, we sought to address the following questions:

1. What are the mediation styles and tactics that mediators currently employ in value conflicts?
2. To what degree are the mediation styles and tactics currently employed in value conflicts experienced or perceived as (counter)productive by mediators?

3. To what degree is the (in)effectiveness of these techniques supported by empirical research?

Methodology

Design

This study consisted of a semistructured interview of fifteen questions (see the appendix) geared at investigating the interventions professional mediators use when mediating value conflicts. We executed a grounded theory method to analyze and interpret the transcripts of the interviews.

Participants

Ten female and nine male mediators ($M_{age} = 51$, range = 27–75 years) participated in this study. The academic background of participants included law ($n = 8$), psychology ($n = 5$), and other disciplines ($n = 10$) such as dispute resolution, sociology, and pedagogy, with several practitioners holding multiple degrees. Participants ranged in years of experience from 1.5 years to 26 years ($M_{experience} = 7.87$). They specialized in different areas of mediation, which we classified into three categories: family (e.g., divorce mediation, $n = 8$); community (e.g., neighborhood feuds, $n = 8$), and corporate (e.g., labor mediation, $n = 5$), with two mediators specializing in more than one area.

During the interview, mediators were asked to recall examples of value conflicts that they have mediated. To this end, they discussed value conflicts that occurred in different conflict domains, specifically, between divorced parents ($n = 10$), between neighbors ($n = 7$), between employers and employees or among colleagues at the workplace ($n = 7$), between family members ($n = 4$), between the government and citizens ($n = 2$), between doctors and patients ($n = 1$), and between parents and teachers ($n = 1$).

Procedure

All practitioners were registered at the Dutch Institute for Mediation. Their contact details were retrieved through the institute’s online database. Invitations to take part in this study were sent out in private e-mails. Fifty-three
mediators were contacted: twenty-eight did not reply, three declined, and in three cases, we were unable to make appointments after the initial contact. We interviewed the remaining nineteen practitioners in one-on-one private settings, with the exception of two cases: in one case, a second mediator was present, and in the other case, the interview was held in a booth in a public hallway. The interviews took approximately one hour and were audiotaped and subsequently transcribed. Prior to the interview, participants were given a brief introduction to the study and were asked to sign a consent form indicating voluntary participation and assuring anonymity. Participants were then asked to elaborate on a series of fifteen questions related to their experiences with mediating value-based conflicts. Finally, participants were asked to fill out six questions relating to their background and were then debriefed and thanked for their participation. As a token of appreciation, each participant received a gift card of ten euros and a university pen.

**Grounded Theory Coding Analysis**

A grounded theory method (Charmaz 1995; Glaser and Strauss 1967) was undertaken to analyze the interview transcripts. In a first round, one researcher assigned codes to responses to each individual question posed. Following the method, these codes emerged from the data and were not predetermined by the literature review. In a second round, the same researcher raised the assigned codes to categories encompassing a broader, more abstract level of characterization. Codes were assigned to categories originating from established terminology in the mediation and conflict management literature or separate categories in cases of unorthodox practices and circumstances. In the final round, a ‘blind’ researcher assigned the predetermined categories to each transcript to enhance reliability. The final set of categories was used to formulate the social psychological interpretation of the entire data set. The interpretations were summarized into several propositions.

**Results**

The analysis of the interviews produced a relevant set of categories related to mediators’ experiences with mediating and resolving value conflicts. In this section, we present the findings that respond to our research questions.

First, we aimed to explore the mediation styles and tactics that mediators turn to when intervening in value conflicts. During the interview, mediators were asked to recall a previously mediated value conflict. By
taking us through the mediation process of the example, mediators informed us of the tactics they used to intervene in the dispute. From the rich descriptions, we have identified and categorized a set of sixty-six techniques (see table 1). Interventions comprised communication techniques; techniques aimed at influencing the physical, emotional, and spatial proximity of the parties and the mediator; specific activities; cost-risk tactics; and techniques pertaining to specific mediation styles and approaches.

*Motives for Employing Techniques When Mediating a Value Conflict*

With such a large number of techniques used to mediate value conflicts, the issue becomes how mediators decide which techniques to apply. Our analysis identified nine motives for choosing to employ a given technique when intervening in a value conflict (see table 2).

Although many mediators chose their techniques by analyzing the conflict and diagnosing it as one consisting primarily of diverging views, a number of mediators based their choice on more personal motives, such as their intuition or mediation styles. Furthermore, three practitioners claimed to employ identical tactics in every situation, regardless of the type of conflict. These findings suggest that the choice between techniques may relate not only to the nature of the conflict but also to the character of the mediator. What is unclear, however, is whether mediators intervening in value conflicts should be advised to use a set of techniques specifically geared at resolving value conflicts or whether mediators would be better off employing techniques with which they feel most comfortable. This question proposes a need for further investigation.

**PROPOSITION 1.** *The efficacy of chosen techniques deriving from conflict-related motives versus mediator-related motives when intervening in value conflicts is in need of empirical verification.***

The two-sided decision-making process suggests a lack of consensus among mediators as to techniques that may or may not be effective when mediating value conflicts. This observation was evidenced by the analysis of our second and third research questions. Specifically, we aimed to investigate the degree to which mediation styles and tactics employed in value conflicts are seen as productive or counterproductive by mediators and the extent to which the effectiveness of these techniques is supported by empirical research with respect to value conflicts. To this end, we asked participants whether there are specific techniques that may function counterproductively when...
Table 1. Techniques Employed to Mediate Value Conflicts (N = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performed by the mediator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Listening, summarizing, posing follow-up questions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promoting self-reflection</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identifying</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relabeling</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confrontation (on behavior)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Paraphrasing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other (e.g., storytelling)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requested from the parties by the mediator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instruct parties to listen, not interrupt each other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Request parties to paraphrase opposing parties' statements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other (e.g., talking stick round)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questioning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peeling the onion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Asking parties to voice what they need to reach solution</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other (e.g., asking parties whether the situation could be worse)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caucus (conducting separate conversations during mediation)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conducting separate conversations prior to start</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other (e.g., taking a walk)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building a trustworthy relationship with the mediator</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating a safe environment to promote information exchange</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building a trustworthy relationship among parties</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desired future state</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Break (time)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Background search</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Projection</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Past, present, future</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activities
Performed by the mediator

- Listing concerns, interests
- Emphasizing common interest
- Providing compliments
- Sketching the problem on paper
- Increasing awareness of litigation procedures, referring to legal framework
- Paradox intervention
- Encouraging escalation
- Bringing in an external expert
- Separating value and resource conflict
- Reassuring parties’ competence
- Other (e.g., exhibiting anger)

Requested from the parties by the mediator

- Encourage voicing own concerns, views
- Perspective taking
- Take-home exercises
- Other affirmation
- Moving from views to interests
- Practice executing concrete agreements made
- Allowing parties to decide who begins
- Allowing parties to decide where to begin
- Brainstorming

Cost-risk tactics

- Threatening termination
- Threatening litigation

Mediation styles, approaches

- Solution-focused mediation
- Narrative mediation
- Transformative mediation

Note: In an effort to avoid overload on techniques mentioned only once, in some cases, techniques were placed into the category “other.” Apart from techniques currently employed in value conflicts, this list also includes techniques mediators anticipated that may be effective in mediating value conflicts. Since mediators generally employ multiple techniques in a given situation, the total frequency of techniques mentioned exceeds nineteen.
Table 2. Motives for Employing a Specific Technique (N = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict related</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Based on interpretation or analysis of the conflict</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Based on techniques used in all types of conflicts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To escape impasse</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Based on the process</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator related</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Based on fitting to mediator's personality</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Based on belonging to solution-focused mediation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Based on intuition</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To avoid mediator's own values and norms</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Based on belonging to acquired method of structure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Since mediators were allowed to mention multiple motives for choosing specific techniques, the total frequency of motives mentioned exceeds nineteen.*

intervening in value conflicts. Table 3 presents the results of our analysis of the segments responding to this question.

Interestingly, nine of the fifteen possibly counterproductive techniques were also among interventions currently being employed in mediating value conflicts (see table 1). At this point, it is useful to elaborate on the mediators' reasoning for claiming the inefficacy of the techniques presented in table 3.

**Addressing versus Overaddressing**

In clarifying the perceived factors accounting for the inefficacy of the techniques found in table 3, mediators discussed the differences between parties in a value conflict versus parties in other types of conflicts. In doing so, mediators particularly highlighted the impact that values may have on established techniques. One mediator explained:

> I think the pure negotiation techniques ... in this case, it indeed concerned a value and I think that people will not let go of that. ... You cannot negotiate about that, and if people suspect that that is what they must do, then I think they will refuse to yield ... and then you will not get anywhere, so there must be space for both values and that makes the given situation ... You must then search for solutions within the situation, but
Table 3. Possibly Counterproductive Techniques When Mediating Value Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confrontation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proximity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Exclusively conducting joint sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performed by the mediator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Formal procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making a list of interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouraging escalation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Paradox intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exhibiting anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bringing in an external expert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Requested from the parties by the mediator
• Traditional negotiation techniques
• Focusing on the solution too quickly
• Dwelling in the past
• Perspective taking (when parties are of equal intellectual levels)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediation approaches/styles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Transformative mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Narrative mediation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The mediator who mentioned exhibiting anger in this segment unexpectedly experienced a productive effect of exhibiting anger, but holds that anger should never be exhibited because it is against the mediator’s conduct.

1 Possibly counterproductive technique that is currently being employed (see table 1).

This comment ties in with previous research showing that parties in a value conflict tend to view classical conflict solutions such as trade-offs and compromises as unacceptable (Druckman et al. 1977; Harinck et al. 2000; Harinck and De Dreu 2004; Tetlock et al. 2000; Wade-Benzoni et al. 2002). Although the formal and structured nature of traditional negotiation techniques (e.g., trade-offs) may not provide the proper space for values to be

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adequately considered, some practitioners especially avoid techniques that give values too much weight. As one mediator described:

There is the transformative mediation. . . . I think that if parties were to undergo transformative mediation, they would have had heavier discussions and that it would possibly function counterproductively and that we would not have reached a solution . . . because they would have then stood more strongly by their norms and values, so they would place that above the current issue. . . . [With transformative mediation] you really explore within and try to identify what about this makes it a problem for me, and then you really reach your own personality and own values and own norms et cetera. So I think that that would not have worked here.

Thus, techniques not granting diverging values a specific or appropriate place at the mediation table (traditional negotiation techniques, formal procedures, and focusing on the solution too quickly; see table 3) may function just as counterproductively as those giving diverging values a predominant role (identifying, dwelling in the past, making a list of interests, perspective taking, and the transformative and the narrative mediation styles; see table 3). The latter techniques may make values too salient to the point of inhibiting resolution.

**PROPOSITION 2.** Techniques geared at intervening in value conflicts should address but not overaddress diverging values.

**Intensifying versus Pacifying**

A number of techniques pertaining to the activities section in table 3 seem to be rooted in the emotional aspect tied to parties in value conflicts. Values communicate our self-identities (Wade-Benzoni et al. 2002). Since they are strongly linked to who we are as people and how we define ourselves, finding ourselves in a situation where our values are at stake can be experienced as threatening (Kouzakova et al. 2012) and may induce emotional responses. Mediation tactics such as confrontation, encouraging escalation, and paradox intervention, which may very well be effective in breaking through impasses when mediating other types of conflicts, may function counterproductively due to the already escalated tendency of value conflicts. In light of this phenomenon, one mediator predicted:
I think encouraging escalation would not have had a positive effect... at the mediation table; everything was geared at calming the situation down, while with other people, you would sometimes let them vent and you would pose further questions to explore what was behind all of it, but, no, I think that would work counterproductively here.

Another mediator recalled: “I did not use the paradox intervention in this case because it was already overly exaggerated; that did not fit in this case, but in other situations it can work very well.”

Mediators do employ intensification techniques in other situations. To this end, one mediator described the positive effect that paradox intervention may have when employed in other conflicts: “Or precisely the opposite, exaggerate that it is indeed hopeless... I wouldn’t have done it in this situation, but you can also do that... That can help sometimes because then they will say, ‘It’s not that bad.’”

Thus, it seems that when mediators are mediating value conflicts, they may benefit from steering away from techniques that intensify the situation (encouraging escalation, paradox intervention, confrontation, and exclusively conducting joint sessions; see table 3) and adopt techniques that aim to calm parties down.

**PROPOSITION 3. Techniques geared at intervening in value conflicts should aim to pacify, not intensify.**

**Exhibiting Anger**

Parties in a conflict are not the only ones who can succumb to emotion. Mediators may also exhibit signs of frustration and hopelessness when progress seems to be out of sight. One particular emotion that the mediators in our study exhibited is anger. Negotiation literature reveals that anger is a common technique that parties use to force concessions and cooperative responses from their counterparts (Van Kleef, De Dreu, and Manstead 2004). In the mediation world, however, mediators are generally not advised to exhibit anger for any purpose because this may imply judgment on the part of the mediator, which does not correspond with his or her conduct. One mediator explained, “[Anger] is perhaps a good example of something that in essence you must not do, that you have learned that... you must not say ‘you should shut up now’ and things of the sort... But I became angry, and that is not appropriate for a mediator.”
Although negotiators commonly use anger, employing this technique does not guarantee concessions from counterparts. In fact, the expression of anger during mediation has been found to be both counterproductive and productive (Friedman et al. 2004). The effects of exhibiting anger may be dependent on a number of circumstances, such as the direction of the anger (Steinel et al. 2008), the power of the party exhibiting anger (Lelieveld et al. 2012), and the conflict issue, for example, resource or value (Harinck and Van Kleef 2011). In terms of the latter, Harinck and Van Kleef (2011) found negotiators' expressions of anger to be experienced as more unfair by counterparts in value rather than resource conflict, leading to retaliatory and escalatory behaviors. It should be noted, however, that these studies focused on the effects of anger expressed by dyads in a negotiation or by parties in mediation. The impact of anger expressed by mediators intervening in value conflicts has yet to be established. Nevertheless, anger is among techniques currently being employed by practitioners in the field. One mediator discovered its positive effects unintentionally: "I once stepped out of my role as a mediator; this does not happen easily because I am very patient... but at a certain point, I became very irritated, and I stepped out of my role and I became angry, and you must never do that, that is not right, but in this case it worked very well."

Another mediator consciously exhibits anger during mediation sessions:

One of the aspects of solution-focused mediation is connecting with the client and... sometimes you get very peculiar clients and... you must also connect with them, so if parties tend to exhibit rude, violent behavior, sometimes you have parties that communicate in a rude way towards each other, then I tell them it's enough, be quiet, you know... And that works, if I just sit there and nod understandingly... and if you give the space, then it will lead nowhere... But sometimes I do ask myself, 'What in God's name have you done?' because I want to be able to justify my actions and then I notice that I have just connected with the clients.

Taking the literature into account and considering the mediators' experiences with the exhibition of anger—despite its incompatibility with the mediator's conduct—it is evident that research is necessary to clarify the circumstances, if any, under which exhibiting anger may function productively when mediating value conflicts.
Indeed, a closer look at the topic of experts throughout all the transcripts led to one interesting account that a mediator shared:

There was a conflict between members of an extreme religious group and there was a lawyer present, who was also a preacher, and he said, "You know what, let me intervene in this conflict; let me do something about this as a lawyer," and the people responded by saying, "We already have a lawyer, and his name is Jesus and he is in Heaven." So these situations are difficult to resolve.

It seems that the impact of including an external expert in the mediation of value conflicts is rather unclear. On the one hand, financial experts may steer the focus away from the values and more toward the interests, which may facilitate the agreement phase. Furthermore, experts with a background in the social sciences or humanities may be more equipped and allowed (by the parties) to judge and weigh in on situations involving conflicting values. On the other hand, in some cases, values may be perceived as too sacred or too personal to undergo the evaluation of any external expert. Research is needed to establish the circumstances under which parties are more likely to accept or reject the input of an external expert.

**PROPOSITION 5.** The efficacy of bringing in an external expert when mediating value conflicts is in need of empirical verification.

**Cost-Risk Tactics**

One set of techniques that none of our participants mentioned as possibly functioning counterproductively caught our attention due to its counterintuitive nature with respect to current theory. Currently participants are employing cost-risk tactics such as threatening termination or litigation when intervening in value conflicts. When a mediator threatens termination, parties are reminded that by not reaching a solution at the mediation table, they lose the fee they have invested in the mediation procedures. Similarly, when a mediator threatens litigation, parties are reminded that by reaching a solution at the mediation table, they avoid substantially higher costs (e.g., attorney costs). Thus, threatening termination or litigation requires parties to shift their attitudes and exhibit a more flexible approach in relation to their values in order to reach a solution at the mediation table and avoid monetary loss.
of negotiation outcomes: victory, compromise, win-win agreement, and a failure to reach agreement (Pruitt and Carnevale 1993). Our analysis of the interviews identified two traditional negotiation outcomes (compromises, \( n = 6 \), and failure to reach agreement, \( n = 1 \)) and one specific type of outcome that we termed concrete agreements establishing new norms (\( n = 12 \)). (One of the outcomes in this category was an estimated solution since the discussed case was an ongoing mediation.) The latter outcome was reached in the majority of cases discussed by the mediators. These agreements consisted of an evaluation of the diverging values, resulting in new behavioral standards adopted by each party, thereby establishing new norms. An example of such an agreement is illustrated by a mediator who discussed the solution of a conflict about noise disturbance between neighbors with different cultures:

The solution was actually that the Russian family would inform the Dutch family in advance when, for example, they will be expecting visitors; this way the Dutch family could anticipate that it will be noisier and that the noise may persist later than usual. . . . And the Dutch family would . . . simply notify the Russian family when they are bothered by it, and the Russian family would take this into account, so it was actually more about going back and forth . . . simply notifying.

In this mediation, parties informed each other of their values. The Russian neighbors adhered to the norm of the importance of family, since in their culture, it is common to invite a lot of family members to visit and stay the night. The Dutch neighbors held the norm of courtesy, since in their culture, it is common courtesy to officially notify others when anticipating circumstances that may cause inconvenience. Together the neighbors were in a dispute about the value of neighborliness, that is, what it means to be a good neighbor. By discussing their values, they were able to reach agreements about their norms. According to the mediator, "So that the Dutch family knew that today there will be visitors and then it is logical that the children will stay up later and . . . play games and make noise and the Dutch family did not really mind this, but when they had the feeling that their neighbors were at it again without providing any notification, they became very angry."

In this example, the Russian neighbors were still able to adhere to their norm of the importance of family and the Dutch neighbors were still able to receive their desired courteous behavior from the Russian family. The
adaptations were more rooted in the norms—in other words, the manner in which the values are expressed. By setting behavioral standards, parties were able to create new norms that are accepted by both sides.

**PROPOSITION 7.** Outcomes reached in value conflicts tend to consist of concrete agreements establishing new norms.

**Discussion**

Mediation is increasingly being used as a form of alternative dispute resolution. Although the practice of mediation has evolved into a rich discipline consisting of numerous mediation styles and tactics, less attention has been dedicated to identifying and developing techniques specifically geared at resolving value conflicts. As a first step to addressing this gap, we interviewed professional mediators in the field to explore the techniques currently being employed when intervening in value conflicts. We also examined the degree to which these mediation styles and tactics are experienced or perceived as productive, or counterproductive, by mediators. Finally, we aimed to identify whether the effectiveness of these techniques is supported by empirical research in order to pinpoint domains in need of further research.

The analysis of the interview transcripts provided a broad overview of mediators’ experiences with value conflicts. Our findings revealed a set of sixty-six techniques that mediators currently employ when intervening in value conflicts. Some mediators make their choice of techniques based on the type of conflict, that is, conflict-related motives, while others employ techniques that are more related to their personalities or mediation styles, that is, mediator-related motives. With respect to value conflicts, it is unclear whether mediators should be advised to employ techniques deriving from conflict-related motives versus mediator-related motives (proposition 1).

Our findings also revealed a set of fifteen techniques that may function counterproductively when mediating value conflicts. Among these techniques are those that aim to downplay diverging values (e.g., traditional negotiation techniques) and those that aim to overaddress diverging values (e.g., the narrative mediation style). According to our findings, techniques geared at value conflicts should instead consist of a balance between addressing and overaddressing diverging values (proposition 2). Techniques that aim to intensify the situation (e.g., confrontation) have also been identified as possibly functioning counterproductively. Our findings suggest
that techniques geared at resolving value conflicts should instead aim to pacify and not intensify the situation (proposition 3). Other possibly counterproductive techniques that are in need of empirical verification include exhibiting anger (proposition 4), bringing in an external expert (proposition 5), and cost-risk tactics (proposition 6).

Finally, our analysis of the transcripts revealed that in the majority of cases discussed by the mediators, parties in a value conflict tended to reach a new type of agreement that did not include the traditional outcomes of victory, compromise, win-win agreement, and a failure to reach agreement (Pruij and Carnevale 1993). Instead, parties in value conflicts often reached solutions that included new behavioral standards accepted by both sides—in other words, concrete agreements establishing new norms (proposition 7).

Although our study provided rich insight into mediators’ experiences with value conflicts, there are some limitations. By conducting one-on-one interviews with mediators in the field, we made use of a self-reporting methodology. Conducting additional observational studies would enable us to contrast and combine the current data, leading to more robust propositions. Furthermore, during the interviews, we requested that participants discuss a previously mediated value conflict in more detail. In practice, however, conflicts are hardly purely value based. Thus, although the follow-up questions were geared to the value aspect of the conflict, the extent to which a discussed conflict was value based is unclear. Moreover, we were interested in interpersonal value conflicts. However, some participants also discussed cases where the conflict arose between more than two people. A distinction should be made between interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, and future research could also focus on intergroup value conflicts.

Finally, although we separated value conflicts from other types of conflicts, perhaps a further distinction within value conflicts is due. The observation that parties in value conflicts reach agreements about new behavioral standards may suggest that these conflicts are perhaps a subtype of value conflicts in the form of normative conflicts, that is, conflicts about what is considered proper behavior. We are not suggesting that this new category should replace that of value conflicts; on the contrary, normative conflicts may serve to further clarify the distinction between different types of conflicts. For example, if it is true that our thoughts and beliefs are more difficult to change than our behaviors, value conflicts may be more difficult to mediate or resolve than normative conflicts. That said, it might be the case that value conflicts become more accessible to mediate or resolve when efforts are not placed on changing parties’ values or forcing parties to give
up on their values but are instead focused on finding new norms (behavioral standards) to manage parties’ ideological differences without jeopardizing their core beliefs.

Conclusion

In this study, we aimed to explore the mediation styles and tactics currently employed by mediators when intervening in value conflicts. In an effort to decrease the gap between research and practice, we were interested in gaining more insight into the effectiveness of specific strategies used to foster resolution in value conflicts. The objective of this study is to identify strategies in need of empirical validation. By interviewing professional mediators, we obtained useful accounts in relation to the mediation of value conflicts. Several propositions were formulated and the areas in need of further attention have been identified. Evidently research is necessary to establish the effectiveness of techniques currently being employed in value conflicts. Research should also result in an indication of the conditions under which the execution of specific techniques may lead to desired outcomes. We aim to address these propositions in upcoming studies in order to develop more robust interventions that professional mediators can adopt when they mediate in value conflicts.

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Appendix: Interview Schedule for Professional Mediators

1. Please describe the types of conflicts that you mediate in your practice.
2. What is the most common type of conflict that you are requested to mediate?
3. Can you give examples of interpersonal value conflicts that you were requested to mediate?
4. Let’s discuss one specific value conflict that you have mediated in the past. What was the topic of the conflict?
5. Did you feel that there were underlying conflicting values in the dispute? If so, which underlying values were present?
6. Can you describe how the mediation process went?
7. Did you employ specific techniques that seemed fitting to the situation?
8. Why did you choose to employ these techniques?
9. Which aspects do these techniques aim to influence (e.g., emotion, perception, behavior, cognition)?
10. Were you able to assist the parties in reaching a solution by employing these techniques?
11. Can you describe this solution?
12. Are there any other techniques that may have been useful in this situation?
13. Are there any techniques that a mediator should not employ in this situation—for example, techniques that may function counterproductively? If so, why shouldn’t a mediator use these techniques?
14. Do you feel that there is enough information about the mediation of value conflicts available for mediators?
15. Do you feel that there are enough techniques specifically geared at resolving value conflicts?