

Collaborators or Underminers of the Dispute Resolution Process? Disputants' Reactions to Mediators' Assessments

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This project investigates how disputants involved in a mediation hearing engage with assessments proffered by the mediators and discusses their role in sustaining the image of the mediators as neutral facilitators of communication. It examines specific linguistic means disputants employ to express reactions to mediators' words, and how they affect the balance between the institutional character of the interaction and the empowering aspect of the mediation process. The study highlights the fact that the relationship between mediators and disputants emerges interactionally on a moment-by-moment basis and does not exist as a static *a priori* construct.