Erisology has been defined as the study of disagreement—where people are no closer to understanding each other at the end of the exchange than they were at its beginning. This is the context for erisology. As mediators, our job is to help people describe and interpret the pictures they are seeing, both of their own positions and those of others. This involves helping them understand the pictures that others are seeing as well.

As mediators, we have a vital role to play in helping people describe and interpret the pictures they are seeing, both of their own positions and those of others. We also have to try and help them see and understand the pictures that others are seeing as well.

Another interesting aspect of this is the degree to which people communicate with jargon and other codes, which have special meaning and can communicate to others. We may also be divided by a common language more often than we imagine. That can make quite a difference when trying to build stronger relationships between academia and business. This can lead to growing mistrust when a party from one background undertakes to do something for someone from another, who may not understand what has been promised.

Interpreters and code breakers might be needed—just part of what we mediators are actually offering to the world.

Generating deeper understanding links to another new discipline I recently came across: Humanomics. This approach, described by David Norman McClatchey in a recent article, aims to position economics at the interface between the natural sciences and humanities in terms of understanding human progress. In his book, the Financial Times' Peter Martin describes the starting point of the way of thinking illustrated in this article:

“Human biology and consciousness are inseparable. Conscious behavior is governed by both social conventions, and the way they cohere. Conventions are, in a sense, rules that make up the body of social reality to which individuals are often referred to as something more than they are, or something better than they are, or something more significant than they are. Conventions can be ethical, social, or cultural, and they can be used to communicate with others. This is why we need mediators and humanomicists.”

As mediators, we should also describe ourselves as erisologists and humanomicists!