Chapter 6

FRAMING, REFRAMING, AND ISSUE DEVELOPMENT

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A MAJOR CONCERN in negotiation is how to reach a settlement in which both parties share joint gains. Both popular and academic texts spend considerable effort prescribing effective ways to reach joint agreements (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Jandt, 1985; Lewicki & Litterer, 1985). These recommendations include concentrating on interests rather than positions (Fisher & Ury, 1981), engaging in problem solving (Lewicki & Litterer, 1985), avoiding conflict escalation (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986), and building trust and motivation to work together (Lewicki & Litterer, 1985). One of the first advocates of joint agreements, Mary Parker Follett (1942), claims that integration brings differences into the open and leads to a process of *revaluation* in which both parties reframe their stances on an issue. For Follett, integration is a circular process in which differences are juxtaposed in a spontaneous flowing together of interests and desires. Unity surfaces not from giving in [compromise] but from "getting the desires of each side into one field of vision" (Follett, 1942, p. 39).

The "field of vision" that Follett describes resembles what has become an important concept in the negotiation literature, *bargaining frame*. Each bargainer enters the negotiation with fields of vision or frames of reference that help him or her construct meaning or make sense of the situation. Revaluation parallels *reframing* by altering fields of vision to reveal a different vantage point (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Although scholars differ in their exact definitions of *frame* and of *reframing*, both concepts refer to the way negotiators come to understand their situation.

Framing and reframing are important concepts in the study of negotiation. First, framing is a key to deciphering how bargainers conceive of ongoing sets of events in light of past experiences (Bartlett, 1932). In negotiation, bargainers must react to momentary changes in behaviors, not as blank receptacles, but as individuals who interpret and make sense of their world (Tannen, 1979). Frames, then, are linked to such concepts as cooperative-competitive orientations (Rubin & Brown, 1975), expectations for a settlement (Gulliver, 1979), biases of bargainers (Neale & Bazerman, 1985), choice of dispute resolution modes (Merry & Silbey, 1984), approaches to third-party intervention in formal and informal disputes (Donohue, 1991; Sheppard, Blumenfeld-Jones, & Roth, 1989), and interpretive schemes (Gray & Donnellon, 1989). Frames and reframing are also related to the way bargainers conceive of the scope, definition, and relationship among issues in the negotiation (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981; Putnam, 1990; Putnam, Wilson, Waltman, & Turner, 1986). Even though researchers typically treat frames as cognitive devices such as schema, scripts, prototypes, and categories, framing and reframing are tied to the ongoing activity of bargaining, the escalation and de-escalation of conflict, and negotiated outcomes (Bazerman, 1983; Neale & Bazerman, 1985, 1991).

Framing and reframing are also salient concepts for communication research, even though only a few negotiation scholars incorporate communication variables into their studies (Carroll & Payne, 1991; De Dreu, Emans, & Van de Vliert, 1991; Gray & Donnellon, 1989; Thompson & Hastie, 1990). Information seeking and interactions between bargainers play a key role in the process of framing. Moreover, framing entails the construction of shared meanings that typify social and cultural contexts (McLeod, Pan, & Rucinski, 1989). In effect, framing and reframing are vital to the negotiation process and are tied to information processing, messages patterns, linguistic cues, and socially constructed meanings.

This chapter reviews and critiques the way that researchers have studied framing in negotiation through focusing on three different approaches: cognitive heuristics, frame categories, and issue development. Because these approaches differ in theoretical underpinnings, past research has not merged these divergent literatures. This review concentrates on the concept of framing rather than on detailed summaries of research findings. After reviewing and critiquing the negotiation literature, we introduce two alternative models, Bateson's (1972) psychological model of framing and Goffman's (1974) frame analysis. Finally, we set forth ways to

improve the study of framing in bargaining through adopting concepts from Bateson and Goffman.

APPROACHES TO RESEARCH ON
FRAMING IN NEGOTIATION

The study of frames in bargaining is a fairly recent phenomenon, even though this work falls into the larger rubric of negotiator orientations and predispositions. Frames, however, differ from cooperative and competitive orientations in the early Prisoner's Dilemma literature and from the study of cognitive complexity by centering on cognition and interaction rather than on motivations, attitudes, and personality traits (Rubin & Brown, 1975). Approaches to the study of framing in negotiation differ in their theoretical foundations and assumptions. The three approaches that surface in the negotiation literature—cognitive heuristics, frame categories, and issue development—will be reviewed and critiqued in light of their theoretical roots, definitions, characteristics, research findings, role of communication, and underlying assumptions. This section concludes with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach for research on communication and negotiation.

COGNITIVE HEURISTICS

The cognitive heuristics approach is rooted in behavioral decision theory and prospect theory of human judgment (Bazerman, 1983; Raiffa, 1982; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Behavioral decision theory posits that bargainers may share a zone of agreement or overlap in their target and resistant points, yet they are unable to reach mutual agreement (Lewicki & Litterer, 1985; Raiffa, 1982). Neale and Bazerman (1985, 1991) treat this problem as a deviation from rationality that stems from negotiator judgment. Drawing from cognitive models of decision making, Neale and Bazerman (1985, 1991) identify the decision frames that introduce systematic bias in negotiation and discuss ways to reduce these biases.

Theory and Definitions. Their treatment of decision frames draws heavily from Kahneman & Tversky's (1979) Prospect Theory. A *frame* is defined as "a decision maker's conception of the acts, outcomes, and contingencies associated with a particular choice" (Tversky & Kahneman,

1981, p. 453). Framing emanates from the way an individual formulates a problem through his or her norms, habits, and personal characteristics. Frames also reflect the way that individuals employ cognitive heuristics or simple rules of thumb for making choices (Neale & Bazerman, 1991). That is, decision makers *satisfice* or select an acceptable or reasonable solution rather than strive for the best alternative.

Characteristics. The key characteristics of framing in this approach are perceptions of loss-gain, risk aversion and risk seeking, anchoring or reference points for frames, overconfidence, availability, negotiator judgments, and the isolation effect. Prospect theory holds that in selecting a decision option in situations of certainty, a person's response to a loss is more extreme than his or her reaction to a gain (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Individuals frame or evaluate potential gains and losses as positive or negative. The theory purports that individuals are more likely to accept a settlement when faced with a potential gain and hold out for future concessions when faced with a potential loss (Neale & Bazerman, 1991). The frame, then, encompasses the potential of losses and gains in light of the perceived certainty of a given outcome.

Neale and Bazerman (1985) translate framing heuristics into biases in negotiation through manipulating *perceptions of losses and gains* and observing *risk seeking and risk aversion* behaviors.[1] Individuals who view an outcome as a potential gain make more concessions and see the negotiated outcome as more fair than do those who hold a negative frame or see their trade-offs as losses (Neale & Bazerman, 1985). Moreover, negotiators with positive frames complete more transactions and attain higher overall profits than those who view outcomes as losses (Bazerman, Magliozzi, & Neale, 1985; Neale & Northcraft, 1986; Schurr, 1987). Further studies show that negative frames are linked to escalation of conflict (Bazerman, 1984), potential impasse (Bazerman & Neale, 1982, 1983), and strike and third-party intervention (Farber & Katz, 1979).

In these studies framing centers primarily on the negotiation task. Relational and context elements also impinge on negotiator frames. Specifically, positive affect in integrative bargaining may reverse the predictions of decision frames. Hollingshead and Carnevale (1990) observe that when negotiators exchange positive affect, bargainers with positive frames are more risk seeking, more likely to risk nonagreement, and less likely to make concessions than are negotiators with negative frames. Single- versus multi-issue agendas also influence the predictions of a loss-gain frame. Bontempo (1990) reports that in the positive frame,

a one-issue agenda leads to greater agreement, higher satisfaction with outcomes, and more perceived fairness than does a multi-item agenda. In contrast, in the negative frame, a multi-item agenda results in a more satisfactory outcome than does a single-item agenda. In both studies, the introduction of relational and context variables reverses the frame effect. Finally, framing shaped by a bargainer's assigned role as a buyer or a seller also influences negotiated outcomes and becomes a source of decision bias (McAlister, Bazerman, & Fader, 1986; Neale, Huber, & Northcraft, 1987).

A positive or negative frame for negotiation stems from the selection of a reference point or an anchor. For example, in a contract negotiation between union and management, the union's reference point or anchor might be last year's contract or the union's publicly announced position or even management's initial offer (Neale & Bazerman, 1991). *Anchors* refer to the designated starting point for assessing whether an offer or settlement option is a gain or a loss. They are easily available and provide ready framing of targets, goals, and initial offers. Anchors, however, may also lead to biases in decision making when bargainers perceive outcomes as losses and fail to adjust reference points in light of the negotiation process. Negotiators who remain committed to initial offers or who hold to their target points in the face of concessions may be unable to reach agreement, even if a positive bargaining range exists (Neale & Bazerman, 1991). Neale (1984) and Huber and Neale (1986) illustrate that the setting of initial goals, whether difficult or easy, has a significant effect on aspirations and expectations for future performance.

Anchoring also establishes a range of confidence for making a judgment. A bias of *overconfidence*, then, also affects an individual's cognitive frame. In situations of uncertainty or moderate-to-extreme difficulty, individuals overestimate their confidence in their judgments (Neale & Bazerman, 1991). In framing the contingencies associated with uncertain outcomes, individuals rarely use disconfirming evidence to test their judgments and they rely on initial estimates to anchor their confidence (Einhorn & Hogarth, 1978). Both patterns lead to a bias of overconfidence in an individual's cognitive frame.

Overconfidence surfaces when bargainers estimate the likelihood that an arbitrator will accept their team's final offer (Bazerman & Neale, 1982; Neale & Bazerman, 1983). Moreover, negotiators who consistently believe that an arbitrator will rule in their favor are unwilling to compromise at the table (Farber, 1981; Farber & Bazerman, 1986). An overconfidence bias in judgment also leads to a reduction in the number of con-

cessionary activities and to a high proportion of impasse outcomes (Neale & Bazerman, 1985). In effect, overconfidence, as a bias in cognitive framing, leads to fewer compromises and more impasses than do judgments based on accurate levels of confidence.

Overconfidence as a bias in cognitive framing may relate to the *availability* bias or the ease of recalling unlikely events (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). The ease in imagining an event, retrievability of instances, and similarity of association promote quick recall of events from memory and bias a negotiator's frame. In applying the availability heuristic to negotiation, Neale (1984) compares the vividness or ease of imagining perceived costs of negotiating versus the monetary and time costs of arbitration. When personal costs such as dissatisfaction with constituents are salient, bargainers are less likely to settle at the table. In contrast, when the cost of going to arbitration is salient, negotiators are likely to reach agreement through compromise. Moreover, presenting information in a vivid and colorful rather than a pallid manner makes options more available or salient in a negotiator's frame (Taylor & Thompson, 1982; Wilson, Northcraft, & Neale, 1989).

Finally, information that is concrete or readily available is more easily retrieved than events that are not perceived as concrete (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). In negotiation, Northcraft and Neale (1986) observe that because out-of-pocket costs are more concrete, they are more likely to be included in financial decision making than are opportunity costs. Since negotiators see out-of-pocket costs as more concrete, they seem more numerous that, in turn, influences a bargainer's judgment. In addition to biases of overconfidence and availability, *judgments that are particular to negotiation situations* also affect cognitive frames. Such biases as the mythical fixed pie, nonrational escalation of conflict, and devaluing the other party's concessions (see Neale & Bazerman, 1991 for an explanation of these biases).

A final heuristic that affects a negotiator's frame is the *isolation effect* (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974, 1981). This effect applies to the way individuals evaluate a set of potential options in decision making. Making choices among options typically follows a "sequential-process-of-elimination" (Tversky, 1972) in which individuals choose the most important attribute of an option and eliminate alternatives that do not include this attribute. Similar strategies include a lexicographic procedure in which negotiators weigh some issues as more important than others or determine if each alternative meets a predetermined cutoff level (Carroll & Payne, 1991). This bias is similar to the isolation effect, but the

elimination of alternatives is based on priority rather than sequence. Although negotiation researchers have not tested the isolation effect directly, Thompson and Hastie (1990) use the lexicographic procedure to find that bargainers stress their most important options and fail to make gains on alternatives that do not meet their cutoff levels. Both the isolation and the lexicographic effects may influence the way bargainers evaluate alternatives and engage in logrolling and splintering of multiple alternatives.

Role of Communication. As a whole, research supports the relevance of Tversky and Kahneman's (1974) theory for negotiations. The literature on cognitive heuristics represents an extensive body of research on framing and cognitive biases in negotiation. Although most of this work centers on inputs to the bargaining process, this approach has implications for communication studies. Within Tversky and Kahneman's (1974) model, communication is the key to understanding how colorful and emotional information functions in the availability heuristic and how feedback alters negotiator overconfidence (Neale & Northcraft, 1990). It is also critical in determining how relational and context factors such as affect and role credibility impinge on positive and negative frames.

In addition, information search, sequencing, and amount are directly related to cognitive frames and to communication processes during the negotiation (Carroll & Payne, 1991). Specifically, bargainers who provide more information about their own interests make fewer judgment errors than do those who do not give information (Thompson & Hastie, 1990). Since information giving and seeking are positively reciprocated, the role of information exchange is critical to a bargainer's judgments. Reciprocity is also linked to the explicit or implicit communication of decision frames. De Dreu et al. (1991) observe that negotiators rely on their opponents' decision frames to direct subsequent negotiation behaviors more often than they depend on their own frames. Specifically, when bargainers send messages that convey a loss or a gain frame, approximately 40% of the opponents reciprocate with the same language. Moreover, negotiators are more cooperative when their opponents employ positive as opposed to negative frames.

Frames, schema, and scripts also shape the use of strategies, tactics, and persuasive appeals in bargaining. Carroll and Payne (1991) point out how tough versus soft stances in negotiation reflect distributive and integrative scripts and how direct and indirect forms of persuasion reveal schema that negotiators have for their opponents and their bargaining situation. Adding communication to research on cognitive framing is

important. However, these additions limit the role of communication by treating it as transmission or as an exchange.

Integrating communication into the cognitive heuristics approach alters the concept of framing from a static to a dynamic model. As Carroll and Payne (1991) observe, negotiators

> must develop a strategy or plan, pay close attention to one's own preferences, seek out information for the opponent's preferences, figure out what to say or do next, pay attention to what the opponent is saying or doing, and be aware of the implications of all of this for revising the strategy and even revising basic beliefs and preferences. (p. 23)

What is needed in the cognitive heuristics approach is an infusion of theoretical models that move framing from a static to a dynamic process, provide a link between framing and reframing, broaden the locus of frames from the individual to the larger social context, and treat frames as being developed collectively rather than originating solely from perceptual and mental activities.

FRAME CATEGORIES

Theory and Definitions. A second approach to the study of framing in negotiation is not well developed nor well researched. It aims to merge cognitive views of framing with linguistic analysis. In Gray and Donnellon's (1989) work, *frames* consist of categories of bargaining experiences derived from the literature (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981; Bazerman et al., 1985; Fisher & Ury, 1981; Putnam & Geist, 1985; Rubin & Brown, 1975). They initially posit six types of categories: (1) *substantive frames* define what the conflict is about, (2) *loss-gain frames* provide interpretations associated with the risk or benefits of various outcomes, (3) *characterization frames* are expectations and evaluations of the other disputants' behaviors and attitudes, (4) *process frames* are expectations about how the negotiation will or should proceed, (5) *aspiration frames* express the disputants' underlying interests and needs, and (6) *outcome frames* are the disputants' preferred positions or solutions (Gray, Purdy, & Bouwen, 1990). Drawing from Fillmore (1975) and Tannen (1979), Gray and Donnellon (1989) use linguistic patterns to index types of cognitive frames and past experiences of bargainers. Hence, they combine a top-down view of frames, informed by research from the bargaining literature, with a bottom-up notion of frames as linguistic

cues. *Reframing* refers to the way frame categories shift throughout the negotiation and to the way ambiguity contributes to these shifts and to subsequent changes in interpreting the conflict.

Characteristics. Frames exist at multiple levels of analysis, namely, type, content, pattern, range, and level of abstraction. To investigate the role of framing in negotiation, researchers determine what frames disputants are evoking in interpreting the conflict, the content of those interpretations, and the extent to which negotiators change their frames and interpretations. Gray and Donnellon (1989) analyze transcripts from the Sheridan Chemical negotiation case and find that bargainers use multiple frames simultaneously during the negotiation, but that these frames are salient at different times during the interaction. The bargainers may hold similar or disparate frames that influence their interpretations. Mismatches in framing are sources of conflict (Gray, 1991, p. 12). Mismatches arise in three ways: (1) the use of different types of frames, (2) different content for the same frame, (3) inferences that negotiators make at different levels of abstraction (Gray, 1991; Gray et al., 1990). Ambiguity that stems from these mismatches creates misunderstanding that may lead to escalation and stalemate or, conversely, may promote reframing. Adjustment of understanding through reframing, or frame alignment, leads to conflict resolution.

In a subsequent study, Gray et al. (1990) analyze episodes of contract negotiations between a performer and an opera company, role played by MBA students. They employ discourse analysis to draw inferences of frame categories based on lexical, syntactical, and social data; the content of the talk; and the function of messages in the interaction. They report two major changes in the typology of frames from their analysis. First, they add an evidentiary frame to encompass facts and supporting evidence for outcome or loss-gain frames and second they develop their category system into a hierarchy with substantive and process categories acting as metaframes to classify text into the remaining frames. The researchers then develop subcategories for characterization and loss-gain frames and divide the transcript into content issues, such as salary discussion and career concerns. Their findings reveal that integrative agreements stem from discussing a large number of issues and from using aspirations frames. Moreover, a specific frame appears to dominate discussion of separate issues. Outcome frames depict discussions of salary concerns while characterization frames typify interaction on career issues.

Role of Communication. Communication plays a central role in the frame categories approach. Language choice reflects a bargainer's experiences, systems of beliefs, and perception of the negotiation. Thus communication serves a constitutive role by revealing the frame categories in use, by determining the ambiguity and overlapping nature of frames, and by tracking instances of reframing. Moreover, in this approach, frames reside in the meanings or interpretive schemes reflected in the interaction of negotiators rather than in their mental states.

Although this approach is communicative in nature and represents a noble effort to integrate frames with social interaction, it inadvertently conflates mutual understanding with agreement. Mutual understanding may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for conflict or for agreement. Negotiators could conceivably use the same frame, identical frame content, or parallel levels of abstraction, and remain fundamentally opposed. Conversely, in the absence of mutual understanding, bargainers may reach integrative agreements through logrolling and cost compensation. Another problem with this approach is using a priori categories to generate a typology of frames in use. Pre-selected or a priori categories may not be consistent with the interpretive underpinnings of this research. Furthermore, the Gray et al. (1990) study lacks clarity methodologically in identifying the beginning and ending of coded units and in making inferences from categories and their interrelationships. Finally, the results of the Gray et al. study indicate that modifications of other approaches such as issue development (Putnam, 1990), issue transformation (Mather & Yngvesson, 1980-1981), and issue management (Donohue, 1991) may yield the same findings. Nonetheless, Gray and Donnellon (1989) should be commended for their dynamic view of frames, routed in disputants' interpretations.

ISSUE DEVELOPMENT

A third approach to framing, issue development, also adopts a communication perspective to negotiation. This approach centers on the task or agenda by focusing on the way issues change during the negotiation process. As an area of research, it is typically associated with the transformation of disputes rather than with negotiator frames (Felstiner, Abel, & Sarat, 1980-1981; Mather & Yngvesson, 1980-1981; Putnam, 1985, 1990). It operates from the assumption that disputes are transformed through shifting frames or altering the way problems are conceptualized.

The framing of a dispute determines the importance and relevance of available facts in a case (Mather & Yngvesson, 1980-1981; Pinkley, 1990). In this approach, then, a *frame* refers to the definition, meaning, and conceptualization of an issue.

Issues correspond to agenda items or topics of concern in a dispute. They differ from positions, which refer to alternatives for reaching agreements and from interests or the needs and desires that underlie positions (Fisher & Ury, 1981). In comparison with cognitive heuristics, issue development focuses on the way bargainers assess alternatives, but it differs from the isolation effect in linking assessments to social interaction. Although issue development encompasses substantive, solution, and outcome frames, it differs from frame categories in centering on the argument or clash of issues as the basis of framing and reframing. Thus argumentation embodies referents that provide a cognitive picture of bargaining events and the way these events should be interpreted (Comaroff & Roberts, 1977). Issue development, then, differs from the other two perspectives on framing in its theoretical roots, its definition of framing and reframing, and the role of context in negotiation.

Theory and Definitions. The theoretical roots of issue development reside in the literatures on dispute resolution, argumentation, and policy deliberations. Frames or the conceptualizing of issues are co-constructed or determined collectively through the way individuals make sense of their situation (Eden, Jones, Sims, & Smithin, 1981). That is, issues are not objective agenda items; rather they undergo a process of naming, blaming, and claiming through the way that people talk or argue about them (Felstiner et al., 1980-1981). Naming occurs when disputants label a situation as a problem. Disputants, then, negotiate blame by discussing who or what caused the problem. Claiming takes place when the person or side with the grievance confronts the individual or organization that they think caused the problem. Although each side enters the negotiation with some conception or interpretation of an agenda item, the way people talk about a problem influences the way they define it. Frames, then, are not simply features of individual cognition, they are co-constructed in the ways that bargainers define problems and courses of action jointly through their talk.

In negotiation, argumentation and debate are means of co-constructing the scope, interrelatedness, and breadth of bargaining issues (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981). That is, arguments are epistemic in that they produce knowledge about the issues under deliberation, the other party's pref-

erences and interests, and the institutionalized rules produced through interaction (see Keough, Chapter 5, this volume). That is, the pro and con attacks on agenda items aim to recast the opponent's definition of an issue. Issue development, then, becomes "a continual process of assessing and reassessing agenda items in light of attacking arguments, information exchanged, and interpretations that bargainers give to these activities" (Putnam, 1990, p. 10).

Characteristics. Characteristics of frames in this approach include the bargaining context, the process of shaping issues, and reframing or generating novel solutions to issues. *Bargaining context* impinges on the way both sides define issues. A particular agenda item is framed within a context of recurring problems between labor and management and the relationships among constituent groups (Derber, Chalmers, Stagner, & Edelman, 1961; Friedman & Gal, 1990; Mather & Yngvesson, 1980-1981; Putnam, 1985). For example, negotiation issues often arise from organizational practices, past grievances, and bargaining history (Derber, Chalmers, & Edelman, 1965).

Framing occurs through the *process of shaping issues.* Although each side typically begins with a conceptualization of the problem, this definition shifts through interactions with the other party. Three types of interactions reveal how framing is jointly shaped. First, arguments between bargainers attack the significance, the stability of problems, the disadvantages of proposals, and the perceived workability of solutions (Putnam & Wilson, 1989; Putnam, Wilson, & Turner, 1990). As each side raises concerns about the importance of an agenda item, its scope, its harms, both parties engage in shaping or framing a problem. Certain items become *stock issues* that recur from one negotiation to the next. For the union, wages as an agenda item may always be too low. Hence, labor argues for the salience of this problem in light of management's conception of the issue and in relationship to particular historic and economic conditions.

Second, framing of issues occurs jointly through the way both sides clash on their arguments or make *cases* to convince the other party. A case is an overall justification that one side constructs in support of its position. Cases resemble a lawyer's brief for defining a problem. When one side presents a case to change the current structure, and the other side disagrees with this need, both sides may "talk past each other" or "talk around an issue" until they find common ground or a new way to conceive of the problem. Each side's case, however, shifts in light of the other party's objections.

Finally, the way bargainers work together to shape issues also emerges from multiple agenda items. That is, each issue in a negotiation contains subissues or segments of the proposal. For instance, although the major issue in purchasing a car might be the price, other issues such as financing, trade-ins, and accessories are embedded in the buyer-seller exchange. These subissues may not be on the agenda when the price negotiation begins. However, as they surface in the bargaining, they influence how the issue becomes defined. Thus multiple agenda items and the splintering, merging, and dropping of issues influence the ways that problems are framed (Putnam & Geist, 1985).

In issue development, *reframing* refers to the transformation of a problem or the way each party develops a qualitatively different field of vision for understanding an agenda item. Drawing from work in organizational development, reframing is *unfreezing* past definitions of issues and reformulating new ones (Bartunek, 1984, 1988; Osiek, 1986). It represents more than a change in the nuance of understanding; reframing is the development of a novel or entirely different view, a *double-loop shift* in understanding a problem (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Reframing, then, corresponds to Follett's (1942) notion of revaluation or integrative solutions and to Pruitt's (1983) techniques of bridging and expanding the pie.

Reframing occurs through challenging the way a party conceives of an issue or through demonstrating that a current frame is ineffectual. A form of reframing that issue development addresses is promoting Janusian thinking or ways to conceive of two or more antithetical positions as simultaneously compatible (Rothenberg, 1979). The pro and con arguments in negotiation provide a forum for juxtaposing opposite positions and for creating multiple interpretations of issues. Negotiation, then, resembles the *dialectical inquiry process* used in reframing managerial decision making (Mason & Mitroff, 1981). In this technique, managers in group sessions generate novel solutions through debating the underlying assumptions on different conceptions of a problem.

Reframing also occurs through employing new metaphors or analogies to present a qualitatively different story about a problem (Schon, 1979). The captivating analogy that transformed traditional cold war frames in the Cuban missile crisis illustrates this type of reframing (Jonsson, 1990). Narratives conveyed during teachers' negotiations also show how bargainers reframe issues through shifting heroes and villains and altering the themes of stories linked to key agenda items (Putnam, Van Hoeven, & Bullis, 1991).

Role of Communication. Communication plays a primary role in the issue development approach. Social interaction is the critical instigator of changes in frames. These changes occur through argumentation, language use, and symbolic forms such as metaphors and stories. Frames or the ways negotiators conceive of problems are co-constructed through interaction as both parties adjust and react to each other's arguments. In effect, frames are not stable entities, rather they are processes that shape and are shaped by pro and con arguments, case making, and social meanings revealed through interaction.

Issue development as an approach to understanding frames in negotiation is limited, however, in its failure to incorporate framing prior to bargaining and in treating issues or problems as the lens to frames and to the social context. Bargainers do not enter negotiation as blank templates. The work on cognitive heuristics underscores the importance of frames that each side holds as they enter the process. Issue development draws from bargainer predispositions in analyzing initial arguments and the origin of issues (Putnam & Geist, 1985; Putnam et al., 1986); however, as a perspective on framing, issue development does not assess these predispositions directly.

Also, as the other perspectives on framing suggest, frames encompass negotiator relationships, stereotypes about bargaining as a social phenomena, and aspirations and goals that extend beyond the agenda. Issue development uses the bargaining agenda as a lens to other aspects of the conflict situation. Since this lens relies on the substantive discussion of issues, this approach is limited in what it can reveal about other aspects of negotiation. Moreover, the larger organizational and economic context enters into issue development through references to past practices. The framing of social situations, however, consists of multiple layers of frames tied to organizational life and to the social context of bargaining.

COMPARISON OF THE THREE APPROACHES

This review and critique indicates that all three perspectives, cognitive heuristics, frame categories, and issue development, offer promise but fail to provide a comprehensive and adequate representation of frames in negotiation. A comparison of the three approaches reveals different strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, the three approaches differ in their notions of what frames are, where they reside, how meanings relate to

frames, what reframing is, and the role of frames in the negotiation process (see Figure 6.1).

In the cognitive heuristic perspective, frames are the conceptions of activities linked to choices. This definition differs from focusing on interpretive schemes (frame categories) and from examining the way problems become conceptualized (issue development). The three definitions are similar in that they focus on the way particular negotiation activities are conceptualized.

However, the major differences in the treatment of frames stem from their characteristics rather than their definitions. That is, framing is a stable or static feature in the cognitive perspective while the other two approaches treat it as dynamic. The dynamic element in the frame category approach is the shifting of the form, content, and abstraction of frames revealed through language. In the issue development perspective, however, framing is enacted in and revealed through argumentative discourse. Although all three approaches see frames as constructing negotiator experiences, the cognitive heuristic approach reifies this process by making frames into mental fixtures while the frame category approach reifies frame typologies into a priori categories.

In the cognitive heuristic approach, framing resides in the perceptual biases of negotiators, while the second approach locates frames in interpretive schemes housed in language and frame categories. In issue development, framing resides in each side's interpretation of the conflict as revealed through their talk. Meanings are in people in the first perspective, in the bargainers' levels of interpretation in the second approach, and in the bargaining interaction that constitutes definitions of the problem in the third perspective. The three approaches differ in their treatments of reframing with cognitive heuristics viewing it as feedback to correct biases, the frame category approach treating it as shifts in interpretations over time, and issue development viewing it as a qualitatively different definition of the problem. Each perspective links framing to strategies, outcomes, and conflict escalation. However, the cognitive heuristic approach treats frames as determinants of bargaining behaviors and outcomes while the other two perspectives view frames as explanatory devices for understanding how strategies and outcomes evolve.

All three perspectives refine the elusive concepts of bargaining expectations and predispositions; and all three present alternatives for understanding how each side makes sense of the bargaining situation. However, all three approaches share several key limitations including, namely, their omission of nonverbal communication, reflexivity of frames, and

Comparison of Three Approaches to Framing

	Cognitive Heuristics	Frame Categories	Issue Development
Definition	Perception of biases associated with choice	Categories and interpretive schemes	Conceptualization of a problem
Nature	Stable perceptual biases	Hierarchically arranged categories	Dynamic interaction processes
Location	Cognition	Superimposed and constitutive of discourse	Meanings that arise from discourse
Meanings	Reside in people	Frame categories, content, and levels of abstraction	Understandings of problems
Reframing	Correction of biases	Shifts in frame categories and meanings	Transformation of understandings
Role in Negotiation	To identify and overcome barriers to rationality	To develop identical frames	To further joint problem solving

Figure 6.1. Comparison of Three Approaches to Framing

the production and reproduction of frames in social context. Two theoretical approaches, used widely in communication but not in the bargaining literature, present options for addressing these weaknesses.

ALTERNATIVE MODELS
OF FRAMING AND REFRAMING

Two alternative models also treat frames as interpretive schemes. Both Bateson's (1972) theory of psychological frames and Goffman's (1974) model of frame analysis focus on interpretive schemes, but they differ in focus, scope, and breadth from the three approaches reviewed in this chapter. Unlike the cognitive heuristic perspective, frames do more than shape the biases in negotiator judgments and unlike the frame category approach, frames are not a priori typologies of interpretations. Unlike issue development, frames arise covertly through unstated rules, complex links between verbal and nonverbal behaviors, and messages that reflect back on the negotiation.

THEORY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMES

For Bateson (1972), frames are *classes or sets of messages* deemed as meaningful actions. These messages entail verbal statements, nonverbal expressions, and interpretations that contextualize relationships and situations. These messages perform *metacommunication* functions in that they provide implicit and explicit cues about how to interpret a frame. Metacommunication is communication about communication, or the way that language provides cues for interpreting both the content or substance of talk as well as the relationship between communicators (see Donohue & Ramesh, Chapter 9, this volume).

For example, the same words in a message can be said in different ways to evoke different meanings. If a negotiator says, "We've conceded all we can at this point. You need to compromise on this issue," the other negotiator must frame this message in a set of categories and react to this command. He or she can detect nonverbal cues, read the ambiguity in the words, observe the low-power language style, and conclude that the message is a bluff (see Gibbons, Bradac, & Busch, Chapter 7, this volume). However, he or she might observe a firm and rigid vocal pattern, stiff nonverbal cues, past negotiator behaviors, and the timing of the message and decide to avoid potential escalation by conceding.

Frames, then, are sets of messages that occur in a psychological context shaped by loops or patterns of metacommunication. They are fluid and reflect back upon the messages that constitute them. Frames are reflexive in that sets of messages are nested within cues that signal how to interpret messages and that reflect back upon ongoing interaction (Rawlins, 1987). Thus a posturing frame in negotiation calls for extreme offers, firm positions, and emotional outbursts as ways of signaling the opponent how to interpret these remarks. If the opponent interprets the message cues as posturing, these patterns reflect back on the posturing frame that constitutes meaning for this class of messages.

Frames are situated in social contexts through premises of communication, cues that signal the beginning and ending of events, and patterns of behavior. Both the learning process and the social context, however, are dynamic and are therefore revised through interpretations of ongoing interactions. In particular, bargaining is a type of social context in which ambiguous messages and evasive behaviors are enacted in complex ways. Negotiators learn how explicit statements, nonverbal cues, and the exchange of offers signal the other bargainer's interests, priorities, and needs. These signals change and may alter the frames of messages and the social context. Messages that explore options may alter the frame from posturing to problem solving and change the social context to collective decision making. Another set of messages, however, may alter the frame to win-lose competition and change the social context to conflict cycles.

Reframing, in Bateson's (1972) theory, centers on changes in framing. It is the process of learning new premises for communication and new cues for altering the social context. Reframing is adopting a qualitatively different frame or class of messages, similar to reframing in the issue development approach. The frame of competition or win-lose at the beginning of negotiation might be reframed through interpreting messages as posturing or play. Reframing might also occur if a negotiator conceives of a set of ambiguous messages as an attack or aggressive move rather than as ignorance or neutrality. As negotiators communicate about how to interpret their messages, they may change old habits and adopt qualitatively different frames or classes of messages for interacting.

MODEL OF FRAME ANALYSIS

For Goffman (1974), frames are definitions of the situation. They are similar to what Bateson (1972) calls the social context; but they relate

to individual intentions, cultural and historical understandings, and natural forces. Frames, then, embody the past and present, including prior negotiations, work relationships, current aspirations, and substantive expectations. Goffman, like Bateson, centers on how frames are modified or transformed. In this way, both theories are similar to the frame categories and issue development approaches. However, Goffman argues against a categorical model of reframing in which small-scale shifts in understanding are identical to macro-level reframing.

Since many elements make up social situations, individuals render some of them as figure and others as ground. This figure-ground relationship forms the *primary framework* for a given situation. For example, in a teacher-school board negotiation, each team enters the situation with their own primary frameworks or sets of interests and aspirations that stem from their life situations. An issue like classroom size may become figure for the teachers framed within a backdrop of school policies, teacher-administrative relationships, student-teacher interaction, educational philosophy, and economic and demographic features of the school district. Negotiation juxtaposes alternative primary frameworks against one another. Reaching a settlement may require transforming these frameworks.

Reframing in Goffman's (1974) theory occurs through two processes: *keying* and *fabrication.* At the macro or social context level, keying brings into focus particular dimensions of everyday life, when past events are recreated in current interactions. Thus negotiating the issue of teacher evaluation in a union contract relives past teacher assessment experiences. Negotiators could key this issue in a number of ways, but both parties need a shared understanding of when and how negotiations will occur. Primary frameworks are rarely keyed in their entirety due to their complexity and inclusiveness. Rather keyed issues are *anchored* or rooted in everyday life. Anchoring indicates how an issue like teacher evaluation is rooted in larger struggles over autonomy and control. Thus negotiation brings key aspects into question in examining primary frameworks. Anchoring locates a keyed issue in background experiences and in deeper frames of meaning.

At the micro-level, interaction processes *channel* or shape the way keyed issues are perceived. At any point in time, multiple *tracks* of activity take place in negotiation. Each activity comprises a separate track. Thus tracks in negotiations may include the issue under immediate discussion, the anchoring of it in daily activities, communication within a team, secret signals and gestures, and complex interests of both sides.

Thus framing in bargaining is multidimensional. Each side strives to control framing, that is, to shape how issues are keyed and what dimensions are channeled for discussion. If neither is fully successful, interactions may reframe issues through separating or interlocking multiple tracks of activity. Splintering and logrolling are examples of channeling processes that modify and expand upon keyed issues.

Micro processes of interaction also impinge on primary frameworks through *embedding* or nesting frames within frames. Embedding examines the keying within each of the multiple tracks. For example, class size as an issue is embedded in a union track of work load and in an administrative track of cost accounting. Discussion of class size during negotiation may also key quality of education. The teachers might claim that larger class size jeopardizes quality of education and warrants additional compensation to maintain high standards. Hence, the expansion of class size shapes the work-load issue in which it is framed. Reframing may occur if the administration introduces quality of education into its cost-accounting track as a way of defining the class size situation. The dynamics and outcome of negotiations on class size could lead to redefining *work load*, which may ultimately transform the primary framework of working conditions.

Reframing also occurs through *fabrication.* Fabrication is similar to keying in that it recasts some dimensions of everyday life that are salient in primary frameworks. In keying, however, both parties are cognizant of how discussion of an issue defines a situation. Fabrication, in contrast, involves deceit. One team may define the situation deceitfully to shape the way the other side perceives it. For example, the school board may claim near bankruptcy, yet, in fact, possess reserves hidden in other accounts. The teachers may fabricate anger and stage a walkout to pressure the school board to move on issues. Both sides may fabricate allegiance to such issues as quality of education to veil deeper agenda items. The track of a fabricated issue forms an ostensive frame that is merely a prop for an unspoken but genuine track. Moreover, negotiators may enact a fabrication that is actually genuine. For instance, they may find it useful to pretend to bluff when, in fact, they are serious.

For Goffman (1974), then, framing is the way people define situations. Issues and activities that are rooted in past experiences, social relationships, and historical context are keyed for deliberation. Keyed issues, then, exist in multiple tracks of activity that are channeled or shaped through interaction. Embedding refers to how issues are keyed within specific tracks. Discussion of issues, in turn, may reflect back on and

alter primary frameworks or the way individuals conceive figure-ground relationships.

Communication is a critical aspect of framing in both theories. For Bateson, communication is the essence of framing through sets of messages, metacommunication, and premises of interaction. For Goffman, communication shapes the way bargainers perceive keyed issues, invoke and integrate tracks of activity, and embed frames within frames. In both theories, interaction is central to reframing through keying and fabrication and through adopting different classes of messages and new habits of communication.

Thus Bateson (1972) reminds us that frames are dynamic, reflexive, and intertwined with implicit as well as explicit messages. Goffman (1974) orients framing to ways of defining the social situation. He centers on the multidimensional, multilayered nature of frames anchored in past experiences. Moreover, Goffman contributes the concept of *primary framework,* which links framing to a larger social context.[2]

Because both theories of framing are comprehensive and complex, it would be difficult to test or even apply them as complete theoretical perspectives. However, researchers could employ elements of each theory to improve on the shortcomings of the other approaches to framing in negotiations.

IMPROVING RESEARCH ON FRAMING IN NEGOTIATIONS

Each approach to the study of framing in negotiation has particular strengths and weaknesses. Concepts drawn from Bateson and Goffman provide ways of enriching these approaches without altering their theoretical roots. The study of framing in the cognitive heuristic perspective could be broadened by treating frames as dynamic processes. In fact, the need to study the dynamic quality of framing surfaces in Thompson and Hastie's (1990) findings. They report that judgment errors change within the first five minutes of bargaining and that these changes are strong predictors of negotiated outcomes. To test the dynamic nature of framing, researchers could employ time-series measures to detect variations in positive and negative frames at different intervals during the bargaining (Monge, Farace, Eisenberg, Miller, & White, 1984). Also, researchers could alter anchors or reference points to examine the effects of these changes on loss-gain frames and on bargaining concessions.

Manipulating messages and models of communication that extend beyond information processing could show how the types and characteristics of interaction enter into the framing process. For example, how do bargainers phrase messages that convey positive and negative frames? Are there differences in the characteristics of frame messages, such as language intensity, immediacy, or diversity? (see Gibbons et al., Chapter 7, this volume). Finally, researchers could employ verbal protocols and account analysis to test variations in bargainer expectations or confidence levels during the negotiation. In effect, treating framing as a dynamic process centers on how bargainers change expectations and preferences (Druckman, 1977; Gulliver, 1979).

Another way to broaden the scope of the cognitive heuristic perspective is to examine sources of biases in the primary frameworks of negotiators. By using verbal protocols or other interview techniques, researchers could ascertain how and why certain availability heuristics are present. They could seek out how these heuristics relate to societal views of bargaining, buyer- seller relationships, and organizational goals. Researchers could also employ scenarios to manipulate primary frameworks and to determine how different figure-ground arrangements might influence loss-gain frames, anchoring, or overconfidence. For example, does a loss-gain frame operate differently if the goal of pushing a certain product line becomes keyed and the goal of overall profit moves to the background?

The frame category approach does not adequately explain how subtle nuances of meaning recontextualize the larger issues in negotiation. Rather than applying a priori categories, Gray et al. (1990) could generate frame categories from the way interaction keys bargaining content and relationships. These categories, as Goffman suggests, could be contextually embedded rather than hierarchically imposed. Researchers could also generate frame categories inductively by asking bargainers about their expectations, aspirations, and interpretations of key issues (Pinkley, 1990).

Issue development treats framing as the way bargainers conceptualize problems or agenda items. Explicit messages about bargaining issues function as a lens to reveal relationships, constituent roles, and sources of agenda items. By centering on the framing of issues, this approach ignores metacommunication, implicit messages, and the larger social context of negotiation.

Incorporating Goffman's notion of primary frameworks and Bateson's work on metacommunication could enhance the contributions of issue development. Placing issues in primary frameworks shifts the focus of

framing to experiences prior to the negotiation. Researchers could tie discourse to primary frameworks through illuminating various tracks of activities such as explicit discussion of issues, implicit references to intentions and motives, and intrateam communication. Insights gleaned from account analysis could reveal how, for example, intentions or constraints imposed by constituents function as tracks to regulate explicit issues. Researchers might employ discourse analysis to sort out the different tracks of activity in negotiation. Implicit references also function as metamessages that signal how to interpret explicit communication. Using Goffman's elements of framing makes it possible for bargainers to reframe without having a clear preconception of the problem. That is, Goffman's model allows for ambiguity and ambivalence to emerge as a viable frame for negotiation (Gulliver, 1979).

CONCLUSION

Although only a few negotiation texts include sections on framing, interpretive schemes, or meaning (Jonsson, 1990; Neale & Bazerman, 1991), the way disputants conceive of their situation directly influences bargaining processes and outcomes. Framing is not only the key to examining such constructs as preferences and orientations, it is also the lens for deciphering how past experiences, social context, and message reflexivity influence bargaining. Framing is also critical for understanding reframing or the way alternative definitions of a situation emerge from bargaining interaction. If we could explain how negotiators alter primary frameworks and reclassify messages, we could help bargainers learn from their situation, generate new metaphors for their experience, and produce novel solutions for reaching settlements.

Research on framing and reframing in negotiation is in its infancy. The three approaches reviewed in this chapter make inroads to the study of interpretive schemes in negotiation. Each approach, however, presents only a myopic view of this complex process. By integrating concepts from two alternative models of framing, each approach could broaden its scope, enrich its explanatory power, and find ways to merge micro and macro aspects of negotiation.

NOTES

1. In applying Tversky and Kahneman's (1981) prospect theory, Neale and Bazerman (1991) drop the role that certainty plays in mediating risk aversion and risk seeking be-

haviors. In its original formulation, prospect theory predicts that in situations of high certainty individuals will be "risk averse in choices involving *sure* gains and risk seeking in choices involving *sure* losses" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981, p. 263; emphasis added). In Neale and Bazerman's (1985) predictions the relationship between overconfidence and risk behaviors may not hold if certainty is incorporated into the links between positive framing and risk avoidance and between negative framing and risk seeking.

2. Bateson provides a microtheory of framing governed by the interpersonal dynamics of the situation while Goffman presents a macro-micro theory of frames centered on primary frameworks in social situations. Both Bateson and Goffman examine framing through sets of messages, the shaping of issues, and multiple embedded tracks of activity. Bateson's concepts of metacommunication and reflexivity of messages would subsume Goffman's notions of tracks of activity, channeling, and fabrication.

Reframing for both theorists represents adopting qualitatively different classes of messages or primary frameworks. Hence, both theorists view reframing as radical changes rather than minor modifications in defining the situation. Unlike Goffman, however, Bateson locates frames at the interpersonal level with messages linked to interpretive schemes. Goffman's theory, in contrast, centers upon macroframes or primary frameworks embodied in social, economic, and political processes. Thus a primary framework exists for labor-management relationships, for bargaining as an activity, and for organizational practices that aid in defining situations.

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