When all that's left to do, is reflect on what's been done

(Live, Kowalczyk, 1994)

Chapter 5

General Discussion and Conclusions

This dissertation examined the influence of conflict issues on negotiation processes. Negotiation is a procedure to resolve opposing preferences between parties (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). As argued in Chapter 1, opposing preferences may be based on three different types of conflict issues. The first type of issue concerns interests – scarce resources such as money, time or personal benefits. The second type concerns intellective issues – interpretations of objective information. The third type concerns evaluative issues – subjective issues such as personal norms and values. Prior negotiation research has focused mainly on interests, and has largely ignored the impact of intellective and evaluative conflict issues on the negotiation process. This is unfortunate because negotiation parties do not only disagree about interests, but they may also have different views of the world or different ideologies. Negotiation is likely to deadlock unless these issues are adequately dealt with (Zubek, Pruitt, Peirce, McGillicuddy & Syna, 1992).

In a newly developed paradigm, we studied the influence of interests, intellective and evaluative issues on communication, cognition, behavior and outcomes in negotiation. Below, a general overview of the negotiation process as a function of the conflict issue is presented in which the findings and conclusions of this dissertation are summarized. Then, theoretical implications of the current research are discussed. Strengths and limitations of the current research are pointed out and suggestions for future research are given. The chapter ends with some practical implications for third parties.
Negotiation Processes

as a Function of the Conflict Issue

Looking at this dissertation from a bird's eye perspective, the findings show that conflict issues have a profound impact on distinct but interrelated aspects of the negotiation; negotiators' expectations, their motivations, their communication, their behavior and, consequently, their outcomes. When interests, rather than intellective or evaluative issues are at stake, negotiating parties have stronger fixed-pie perceptions and lower intentions to cooperate and a greater tendency to "beat around the bush". Those differences notwithstanding, negotiations about interests, intellective and evaluative issues quickly evolve into contentious exchanges when parties realize that own preferences are, indeed or unexpectedly, opposed to those of the interdependent other. This contentious phase is likely to result in temporary impasses, especially when resistance to yielding is high. In such temporary impasses parties may realize that their competitive approach is not very beneficial and, as a result, they tend to switch to integrative behavior. However, only when the negotiation concerns interests parties are willing to consider and make tradeoffs between losses on less important items for gains on more important items. Consequently, especially negotiations about interests are likely to result in integrative agreements when resistance to yielding is high rather than low.

The current dissertation makes several specific contributions to the negotiation literature. First, the findings concerning fixed-pie perceptions (Chapter 3) show that conflict issues influence parties' ability to correctly understand the structure of the negotiation. Most negotiations have integrative potential, and when parties do not understand the payoff structure correctly, they are less likely to develop integrative solutions that satisfy not only their own, but also their opposing party's preferences (Bazerman & Neale, 1983; De Dreu, Koole & Steinel, 2000a; Thompson & Hastie, 1990; Thompson & Hrebec, 1996). Moreover, the fact that fixed-pie perceptions depend on the conflict...
issue suggests that fixed-pie perceptions are the result of the conflict issue in combination with a false-consensus bias, rather than the result of culture or the human cognitive architecture, as argued by Thompson and Hrebec (1996).

Second, this dissertation introduced beating around the bush as a negotiation tactic. Beating around the bush is another barrier for integrative negotiation because it reduces the exchange of information, and tradeoffs that would be beneficial to both parties may go unnoticed. It was shown that parties in negotiations about interests avoid talking about (self)interest, while parties in negotiations about intellective and evaluative issues generate arguments that refer to the actual conflict issue (Chapter 2). These findings are in line with anecdotes offered by Druckman, Rozelle, and Zechmeister (1977) who noted that parties use alternative rationales for claims that are actually guided by self-interests, and the theoretical position assumed by Hegtvedt and Cook (1987) that self-interest is often masked by evaluative arguments. The research presented in Chapter 2, however, is the first to investigate beating around the bush empirically and to show that its use depends on the conflict issue at stake.

Third, this dissertation was the first to empirically show that tradeoffs are more acceptable when a negotiation concerns interests rather than evaluative issues. Tradeoffs are crucial in negotiations because they enable parties to reach high negotiation outcomes (Bazerman, Curhan, Moore, Valley, 2000). Although some scholars have put forward the idea that tradeoffs are 'not done' when the negotiation concerns values (Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green & Lerner, 2000; Thompson & Gonzalez, 1996; Zubek, et al. 1992), this dissertation is the first to support this notion empirically.

Fourth, this dissertation increased our knowledge about the behavioral dynamics in negotiation know as differentiation-before-integration. Although it has been argued that many negotiations follow this pattern (Lewicki, Litterer, Minton & Saunders, 1994; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Walton & McKersie, 1965), the research in Chapter 4 is one of the first to provide empirical support for the idea that temporary impasses trigger the switch from distributive to integrative behavior. More importantly, the finding that differentiation-before-integration
is limited to negotiations about interests is an important qualification of earlier notions about the generalizability of the behavioral pattern.

Finally, this dissertation shows that achieving high joint negotiation outcomes may be limited to a very specific negotiation situation; when the negotiation concerns interests and the parties have high resistance to yielding. Many negotiations are about intellective or evaluative issues, or parties have low resistance to yielding. As such, the current dissertation is an important qualification of the negotiation literature. Reaching high joint outcomes via tradeoffs, which is generally advised as the best way to solve a negotiation, may be acceptable, appropriate and thus feasible only in the specific case of a negotiation about interests.

**Theoretical Implications**

**Mental Models**

The current research suggests that conflict issues trigger different mental models of a negotiation. A mental model of a negotiation is "a cognitive representation of the expected negotiation, a representation that encompasses understanding of the self, negotiator relationships, attributions about the other and perceptions and knowledge of the bargaining structure and process" (Bazerman, et al., 2000, p. 287). Specifically, it was shown that people react differently to situations that are structurally equivalent, but differed in terms of the conflict issue underlying preferences and priorities. The idea that own and other's preferences were based on interests, intellective issues or evaluative issues determined how people perceived the opponent, their willingness to cooperate, the acceptability of certain proposals, behavioral patterns and eventually the negotiation outcomes. The fact that the effect of conflict issues was so robust and affected many aspects of the negotiation process suggests that conflict issues trigger a mental model or mind-set about the kind of negotiation that is to follow. Interests appear to trigger a negotiation model of give-and-take and tradeoffs, and intellective and evaluative issues appear to trigger a negotiation model of argumentation and persuasion.
Temporary Impasses

A temporary impasse appears crucial to make negotiators switch from competitive claiming behavior to cooperative integrative behavior (Chapter 4). Temporary impasses are moments during the negotiation in which the parties temporarily postpone their negotiation without having reached an agreement. Temporary impasses are related to the idea of ‘going to the balcony’ (Ury, 1991), a ‘cooling off period’ (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993), a ‘hurting stalemate’ (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993) or ‘a ripe moment’ (Zartman, 1991).

The finding that a greater number of temporary impasses in the beginning of a negotiation are related to higher levels of integrative behavior in the final stage of a negotiation is consistent with Pruitt and Carnevale’s (1993, p. 114) postulate that in negotiations ‘joint-concern and integrative behavior often develop as a result of insight into the fact that one is in a hurting stalemate’. Similarly, Brett, Shapiro and Lytle (1998) found that procedural remarks -- statements that refer to the process of the negotiation itself -- were able to change negotiators’ focus from contentious, distributive communication to more constructive, integrative communication. It is also consistent with the finding that negotiators engage in more integrative behavior and reach higher joint outcomes when they are strongly motivated to think deeply about their negotiation problem (De Dreu, et al., 2000a).

The present work leaves unanswered the question why temporary impasses have such a beneficial influence on the development of integrative behavior in negotiations about interests. One reason may be that temporary impasses enable and motivate negotiation parties to think more deeply about the other party’s preferences. De Dreu, et al., (2000a) showed that non-directional motivation – one’s motivation to form an accurate and reasonable impression – determined the extent to which opposing negotiation parties engaged in thorough and systematic processing of information, which resulted in more integrative agreements. In general, individuals do not seem to engage in systematic processing of information unless they are explicitly motivated to do so (De Dreu, et al., 2000a) and temporary impasse may be one reason for negotiators to engage in more systematic thinking.
Another reason may be that temporary impasses influence parties’ social motivation. Parties with an egoistic motivation search for good outcomes for themselves, while parties with a prosocial motivation search for good outcomes for themselves and their opponent (De Dreu, Weingart & Kwon, 2000b). Parties with an egoistic motivation may realize, during a temporary impasse, that their self-interest is served better when they take the other party’s preferences into account. Thus, during a temporary impasse, a prosocial motivation arises, which leads to more information exchange and problem-solving behavior and results in more integrative agreements.

A final reason may be that temporary impasses enable parties to restore their relationship. Competitive claiming behavior may result in a hostile atmosphere. During the temporary impasse, negative emotions or frustrations can be vented and misunderstandings can be solved. This emotional venting enables the parties to calm down and focus on the negotiation again. In line with this reasoning, Ury (1991) advised negotiators to ‘go to the balcony’ (mentally) to distract from one’s emotions and natural impulses to retaliate when the other party makes a competitive move, in order to avoid an escalation of the negotiation.

A word of caution is needed. The beneficial effect of temporary impasses on integrative behavior was found in one study only, and needs to be replicated in follow-up studies. Moreover, we did not manipulate temporary impasses and our findings were correlational, excluding conclusions about the causal relationship between temporary impasses and joint outcomes. Future research is needed in which temporary impasses are experimentally manipulated. One way to investigate temporary impasses is to introduce breaks during a negotiation or not. During the breaks, parties are either allowed to reflect upon the negotiation, or they receive a filler task and cannot reflect on the negotiation. Based on the reasoning above, it would be expected that negotiations with temporary impasses would result in more integrative agreements, but only when parties had time to reflect upon the negotiation during the temporary impasses.
Win-win Agreements

The current dissertation implies that win-win agreements, that should satisfy both parties' concerns, are not always the best way to solve a disagreement. At first blush, it seems reasonable to aim for win-win agreements because these agreements would be satisfactory for both parties. Moreover, these agreements are supposed to be more popular with the parties, they should be more likely to be complied with, they should foster a positive relationship between the parties and should contribute to organizational effectiveness (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993).

The advice to aim for win-win agreements, however, is not tenable in the case of negotiations about intellective issues. Correctness is more important than agreement in negotiations about intellective issues (Brehmer, 1976). A win-win agreement in which a party trades off right on one issue for wrong on another issue is unlikely to produce mutually satisfactory and stable solutions, simply because one of the intellective issues is not correctly solved. As such, negotiations about intellective issues are best served by a victory by the party that is (most) correct.

The advice to aim for win-win solutions is problematic as well in negotiations about evaluative issues. The resolution of differences based on personal norms and values or political preferences is difficult because it requires changing issues that are very meaningful to one's personality and sense of self. It requires that one of the parties changes his or her view of a situation, including the self, but such change may be very difficult to establish because evaluative issues are often a matter of belief, and may defy rational arguments.

That win-win agreements are not always possible or appropriate suggests that, sometimes, alternative strategies may be desirable. Avoiding the conflict and agreeing to disagree may allow the conflict to become less prominent, and the disagreement may eventually disappear. This notion is supported by De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) who found that avoiding the conflict issue was an effective way to reduce the negative effects of a disagreement about an evaluative issue.
Cultural Differences

The research in this dissertation investigated the effects of conflict issues in the Netherlands, with participants who were raised in a Western society. It is important to investigate the effects of culture in combination with conflict issues, because individuals in different cultures may be more or less sensitive to certain conflict issues. For example, we would expect that individuals in honor cultures would be more sensitive to evaluative issues than individuals from non-honor cultures. Reputation, the social recognition that one’s behavior is in accordance with honor values and norms, is very important in honor cultures and evaluations by others are important determinants of one’s personal worth (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997; Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead & Fischer, 2000). In non-honor cultures, personal accomplishments are important for one’s personal worth. Differences concerning evaluative issues such as personal norms and values might be interpreted as a negative evaluation of the person, and persons from an honor culture might be more sensitive to this kind of negative evaluations by others.

Research by Beersma, Harinck and Gerts (2001) indeed suggests that honor culture influences the reactions toward conflicts about evaluative issues. Beersma et al. (2001) measured the importance that individuals attached to their personal honor, and measured individual’s reactions towards a scenario describing a negotiation about interests or about an evaluative issue. The negotiation about interests concerned the question who was going to work overtime and the negotiation about an evaluative issues concerned the question whether is was acceptable to use company material for domestic purposes. It was found that individuals who scored high on the honor scale experienced a conflict about an evaluative issue as more intense than individuals who scored low on the honor scale. As a consequence, individuals who scored high on the honor scale had stronger intentions to react with forcing behavior than individuals who scored low on the honor scale. Thus, cultural values may make individuals more or less sensitive for certain conflict issues and therefore they may react differently to the same conflict issue. The study of intercultural
negotiation and conflict management could benefit from closer attention to the interplay between culture and conflict issues.

**Strengths and Limitations**

**Multiple Methods**

One of the strengths of this dissertation is that the effects of conflict issues were measured in many different ways; laboratory experiments including cognitive and behavioral measures, vignette studies and a field study. The results of Chapter 3 and 4 (including all three types of studies) show a similar pattern; tradeoffs and integrative problem-solving behavior are more likely to occur in negotiations about interests than in negotiations about evaluative issues, and as a result parties in negotiations about interests reach higher joint outcomes. Moreover, the pattern of differentiation-before-integration in negotiations about interests in Chapter 3 was replicated with behavioral measures in Chapter 4. Thus, we have replicated our findings in different settings and results are consistent between experiments.

The effects of conflict issues were mainly investigated within the newly developed paradigm in which a lawyer and district attorney negotiate about the penalties for several offenders. The findings, however, are not limited to this specific paradigm but generalize to different settings. First, the laboratory findings were replicated in a field study in which managers and professionals reported about negotiation behavior in negotiations that they had experienced. Results showed that, in line with the laboratory findings, more problem solving was reported in negotiations about interests, rather than in conflicts about intellective or evaluative issues. The reported negotiations covered a wide area of possible negotiation issues, suggesting that the findings concerning conflict issues are pervasive, general and robust, and not limited to the specific experimental tasks used in some of our research.
Parties with Different Conflict Issues

In our research, both parties' preferences were based on the same conflict issue. However, as Pinkley and Northcraft (1994) noted: "It may be difficult [...] for disputants to agree on what is in dispute in a shared conflict since they may experience [...] the same conflict in quite different ways. This is not to suggest that objective reality does not exist, only that disputants' subjective experience is their reality and thus determines the nature of the conflict for them" (Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994, p. 193). The question then becomes; what happens if negotiators have different conflict issues underlying their opposing preferences? For instance, a district attorney who aims for jail penalties because she thinks this is most just may be confronted by a lawyer who aims for monetary fines because monetary fines favor her career. Such situations may be harder to solved because the different conflict issues add extra "noise" to the negotiation. A party whose preferences are based on interests may, for example, propose a tradeoff which unexpectedly raises moral indignation in the other party because the other party's preferences are based on an evaluative issue. This type of misunderstanding may lead to an escalation of the conflict because behaviors that are acceptable or appropriate depend on the conflict issues and opposing parties may have different conflict issues to be solved in their dispute.

It may be that parties with different underlying conflict issues adopt each other's conflict issues during the negotiation process. Pinkley and Northcraft (1994) and De Dreu, Carnevale, Emans and Van de Vliert (1994) found that parties' interpretations of a conflict converged during a conflict interaction. Pinkley and Northcraft (1994) found that conflicting parties showed larger differences in their ratings of the same conflict along a cooperate-win dimension or an emotional-intellectual dimension before they actually discussed the conflict than afterwards. Thus, although parties have different ideas about what the conflict is about at the beginning of the conflict, they influence each other during the conflict, and their perceptions of the conflict become more alike.
Interestingly, there may be some barriers to adopting each other's conflict issue. In Chapter 2, it was shown that in negotiations about interests parties often present arguments suggesting that their preferences are based on intellective or evaluative issues. When parties beat around the bush, it seems more likely that the other party also frames his or her preferences in terms of an intellective or evaluative conflict issue, rather than framing them in terms of interests. This would suggest that evaluative issues dominate conflict interaction. On the other hand, Montada (1996) and Miller and Ratner (1998) argued that people tend to overestimate self-interest in other people. This suggests that parties suspect the other party to have preferences that are based on interests, regardless of the conflict issue that the other party communicates. Future research should take a closer look at how negotiation processes develop between parties that have different conflict issues underlying their preferences.

Categorization of Conflict Issues

The research reported in this dissertation may suggest that every negotiation issue can be categorized as a negotiation about interests, intellective issues or evaluative issues. However, negotiations can also involve a mixture of interests, intellective, and evaluative issues. For example, vested interests such as saving face or winning new advocates for a position are often at stake in negotiations about evaluative and intellective issues. As Druckman, et al. (1977, p. 107) noted: 'a confrontation for the purpose of persuading another to accept one's beliefs and attitudes, or presumed facts, is likely to involve a potential "payoff" to the advocate in the form of a new adherent and his enthusiastic admiration'.

The distinction between negotiations about interests and negotiations about intellective issues might not be a strict dichotomy but rather a continuum with 'pure' negotiations about interests and 'pure' negotiations about intellective issues at the extremes and 'mixed' negotiations in between. Similarly, the distinction between negotiations about interests and negotiations about evaluative issues might not be a strict dichotomy but rather a continuum with 'pure' negotiations about interests and 'pure' negotiations about
evaluative issues at the extremes and 'mixed' negotiations in between (Druckman, et al. 1977).

There is also a continuum from negotiations about intellective issues to negotiations about evaluative issues. Negotiations about 'pure' intellective issues, for which the answer can easily and objectively verified, occupy one extreme of the continuum. Negotiations about 'pure' evaluative issues, for which the correct answer cannot be verified, occupy the other end. Negotiations about issues that can be verified theoretically, but for which it is hard to find the truth, occupy the middle. An example of such an issue is the question of the causes of the hole in the ozone layer above the South Pole. There is an objectively correct answer to that question, but it is hard to establish (Laughlin, 1980; Maass, Volpato & Mucchi-Faina, 1996).

The reasoning above suggests that negotiations can be classified in a triangular continuum with the negotiations about the 'pure' conflict issues occupying the corner positions. The more a negotiation is situated near one of the corners of the triangular continuum, the more the negotiation process will resemble the negotiation process of the negotiation about the 'pure' conflict issue as manipulated in our research.

**Practical Implications for Third Parties**

This dissertation has implications for mediators – third parties - trying to help negotiators to solve their divergent preferences. First, mediators should pay attention to the issues under debate. The results concerning beating around the bush showed that negotiations about interests may be framed as negotiations about intellective or evaluative issues. Solving the intellective or evaluative issues when parties beat around the bush is unlikely to produce a lasting and profitable agreement when the underlying interests are not dealt with. Thus, mediators need to scrutinize intellective and evaluative issues in order to know whether there are underlying interests at stake.

Second, negotiations about interests and negotiations about intellective or evaluative issues run different courses, and different kinds of interventions
may be needed. In the case of negotiations about interests, third parties might stimulate integrative problem-solving behavior and explore possibilities for tradeoffs. Tradeoffs should not be stimulated, however, in negotiations about intellective or evaluative issues. These issues require 'altered understanding of the situation by one or both parties' (Druckman & Zechmeister, 1973, p. 150) or, perhaps, agreeing that one disagrees.

In the case of an intellective issue, in which parties search for an objectively correct answer, a mediator could act as a judge verifying which party is right and providing non-binding arbitration. The mediator could also suggest the parties to see an expert and to follow the expert's judgment. Latour, Houlden, Walker and Thibaut (1976) indeed showed that disagreeing parties were more willing to accept arbitration when there was an objective standard to measure which party is right or wrong (as in intellective issues), than when there was no such standard. Similarly, Elangovan (1995) promoted arbitration or adjudication to solve disagreements that focus on correct interpretations of information or ambiguities about how to interpret information (e.g. intellective issues).

A mediator should try to leave evaluative issues out of the negotiation as much as possible. There is no correct answer for evaluative issues, and parties may argue about it for ages without getting any nearer to an agreement. Moreover, evaluative issues such as norms and principles are often deeply felt, which encourages rigid positions (Zubek, et al. 1992), and renders compromise impossible. Perhaps, in the cases of deeply felt evaluative issues the mediator's role is primarily to help parties to accept that they disagree and that agreement is not necessarily required. Indeed, De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) showed that teams in organizations were more effective when they managed evaluative conflict through avoiding rather than through problem solving.
This dissertation shows that the nature of the conflict issue affects negotiation. We developed a new typology in which three major causes of disagreement were studied, namely interests (who gets what?), intellective issues (what is factually correct?) and evaluative issues (what is good?). Disagreements about these issues can be solved by negotiation, but our research showed that different conflict issues consistently affect what negotiators say, what they think, what they do and what they get. The effects of conflict issues are found in the laboratory as well as in the field, suggesting that the influence of conflict issues is consistent across situations. As conflict issues influence so many aspects of negotiation, it is suggested that different conflict issues trigger different ‘mental models’ of negotiation. Interests trigger a negotiation model of give-and-take and tradeoffs, whereas intellective and evaluative issues trigger a negotiation model of argumentation and persuasion. Thus, the negotiation process takes a different course depending on the conflict issue. Conflict issues matter. In fact, they matter a lot.