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**ABSTRACT**

Noting the call for research that links argument theory with negotiation, this paper examines the nature and function of argument negotiation in current organizational bargaining research theories. Five perspectives are extrapolated to define "argument" and demonstrate how different viewpoints can affect understanding of the negotiation process. The paper argues that although it tends to be a generic term in negotiation studies, how "argument" is defined in organizational bargaining has a great impact on the (1) selection of discourse for analysis, (2) identification of rationality standards for evaluation, and (3) generalizability of results. The nature of human rationality and the established shorthand notation system of argumentation are then examined. The paper investigates the contrast between the focus of most traditional negotiation studies--determinant solution and mixed motive bargaining--and that of much current research--the motivational and cognitive processes embodied by social psychology. Methodological differences in how both conversational argument and argument fields theories characterize argumentation in the negotiation process are discussed. Finally, the paper critiques the applicability of both theories as frameworks for organizational bargaining and emphasizes that negotiation researchers should be able to articulate their concept of argumentation and to acknowledge its influence on their research. (JD)

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THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF ARGUMENT  
IN ORGANIZATIONAL BARGAINING RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

"Argument" tends to be a generic term in negotiation studies, yet the manner in which argument is operationalized has great impact upon (1) selection of discourse for analysis, (2) identification of rationality standards for evaluation, and (3) generalizability of results. This essay responds to several calls for an explication of the theoretical basis of argument in negotiation. Five current perspectives on argument are used to examine the nature and function of argument in organizational bargaining research.

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**THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF ARGUMENT  
IN ORGANIZATIONAL BARGAINING RESEARCH**

Originally, negotiation researchers treated communication as just one of several independent variables; but now there is a growing consensus that communication is the very essence of bargaining, or negotiations<sup>1</sup>, (Donohue, Diez, & Hamilton, 1984; Fisher & Ury, 1981; Putnam & Jones, 1982a). Yet little work had been conducted on the principal mode of communication in the negotiation process--argument. A well defined conception of argument is important because (1) it determines what discourse a researcher examines, (2) it implies conceptions of rationality, and (3) research cannot be generalized across studies with diverse conception of argument. The lack of systematic analysis of argument in negotiation has been lamented by Druckman (1977, p. 390), Bacharach and Lawler (1981, p. 158), Donohue, Diez and Stahle, (1983, p. 255) and most recently by Walker (1985, p. 747), who concluded: "To date, no substantive attempt has been made to wed argumentation theory . . . to negotiation. Such efforts could contribute much to the theory and practice of negotiation" (p. 762).

In order to respond to this call for research, I will examine and critique the nature and function of negotiation arguments in light of current argumentation theories. This analysis will review the different definitions of arguments, and concomitantly rationality, in order to demonstrate how different argumentation perspectives affect our understanding of the negotiation process. As a result of this classification and critique, negotiation researchers should be able to articulate their conception of argument, and acknowledge its influence on their research.

Because of the depth and breadth of bargaining research, this review's primary focus is on argumentation in organizational negotiations, especially labor-management relations. Research on mediation and arbitration is excluded as they differ in form and function from negotiations<sup>2</sup>. Under the classification of "Traditional Negotiation Studies" I examine argumentation in game theory and mixed motive negotiation research because these works were instrumental in the development of current organizational bargaining research. The third section reviews and critiques two research programs, conducted by communication scholars, which focus specifically upon argumentation in labor relations. But before analyzing the nature and function of argument in negotiation studies, it is necessary to review the different perspectives on argument and their assumptions on human rationality.

#### PERSPECTIVES ON ARGUMENT

Although argument is used in a generic sense in the negotiation literature, several diverse argumentation perspectives exist. Argument can be understood as a product (O'Keefe, 1977, 1982), interaction (Jackson & Jacobs, 1980, 1981; Jacobs & Jackson, 1982), cognition (Hample, 1985). The argument field perspective looks at arguments operating within a specific context (Klumpp, 1981; Kneupper, 1981; Rowland, 1981; Toulmin, 1958; and Willard, 1981, 1982). Yet regardless of the perspective, the evaluation of argumentation necessitates an understanding of rationality. Generally speaking, rationality refers to the validation of claims according to a set standard (McKerrow, 1982). Each argumentation perspective has its own standards of rationality; and the standards vary from objective formal logic to contextual intersubjectivity. Consequently, a researcher should use the proper rationality criteria when evaluating negotiation arguments. The remainder of this section describes each argumentation perspective

mentioned above, introduces the established shorthand notation system used to identify the different argument types, and where necessary, explains how rationality functions in that perspective.

### Argument as Product

The traditional conception of argument is that of a statement designed to effect listener attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions. The nature of this argument is that of an independent entity, or **product**. The statement "Labor demanded a 12% cost of living increase from management," is an example of argument as product. A shorter way of identifying argument as product is **argument<sub>1</sub>** (O'Keefe, 1977, 1982). The rationality standards in this perspective can follow traditional Cartesian logic or discourse-grounded reason giving (O'Keefe, 1982, pp. 17-18; McKerrow, 1982, p. 106). In a later work, O'Keefe modifies the definition in order to distinguish **argument<sub>1</sub>** which is conveyed through a speech act, with the speech act of **making an argument<sub>1</sub>**. O'Keefe explains this distinction as follows:

A paradigm case of making an argument<sub>1</sub> involves the communication of both (1) a linguistically explicable claim and (2) one or more overtly expressed reasons which are linguistically explicit. . . . That is, in exemplary cases of argument-making, one should be able to say what the argument<sub>1</sub> was, and to express linguistically both the claim and the overtly expressed reasons (1982, p. 14).

For example, a paradigm case of making an argument<sub>1</sub> is after labor says, "We want a 12% cost of living increase," management counters with, "That's ridiculous, the CPI has been at 4% for the last two years." Management is making an argument<sub>1</sub> with the explicable claim that a 12% raise is too high. The claim is supported with the explicit reason that the CPI has been 4% for the last two years.

Paradigm case requirements of argument<sub>1</sub> are similar to those of "making argument<sub>1</sub>" but differ in that both the claim and reason can be linguistically "explicable" rather than "explicit." For example, "We want a 12% cost of living raise" has an explicit claim, but the justifying reason(s) is/are implicit. By allowing the claim and reasons to be explicable there is no behavioral expectation (explicitness) to fulfill as is the case with making an argument<sub>1</sub>. O'Keefe's justification for this distinction is that, "This formulation avoids any reference to the way in which an argument<sub>1</sub> is actually made (communicated); that is, the formulation more nearly distinguished the abstract object 'argument<sub>1</sub>' from the art of argument-making" (1982, p. 17).

#### Argument in Interaction

Unlike argument<sub>1</sub>, argument<sub>2</sub> reflects argument in interaction. That is, argument<sub>2</sub> cannot be conceived of as an entity existing outside of interaction. The paradigm case for argument<sub>2</sub> is described as, "Any time there is overt extended expression of disagreement, an argument<sub>2</sub> would ordinarily be said to be occurring." (O'Keefe, 1982, p. 9). In other words, argument<sub>2</sub> is the type of everyday interaction which laypersons might also label a "dispute," "fight," "disagreement," "squabble," or "misunderstanding."

According to Jacobs and Jackson (1982, pp. 215-218) the reasonableness of argument<sub>2</sub> is determined in two ways. First, Jacobs and Jackson use Mead's concept of the **generalized other** to explain how arguments are judged to be reasonable. Briefly, generalized other refers to the melding of individual attitudes and actions into a collective perspective. Because this perspective is an "average" of all individual opinions, the effects of idiosyncratic behaviors are mitigated, and the collective perspective is considered to have an "objective" quality. Thus the collective perspective is considered the **reference point** and serves as the standard for evaluating the reasonableness of a claim. Second, **felicity conditions** provide criteria

for judging the reasonableness of a speech act. Felicity conditions are "categorical prerequisites to the proper or valid performance of a speech act" (p. 221). Restated, felicity conditions delimit socially appropriate responses which promote move toward agreement. Thus, rational responses are those which promote agreement and ordinary language users are capable of making such responses; "What makes argument unique is not some special reasoning faculty, but the general system of rules through which very general processes are adapted to a particular type of activity" (Jacobs & Jackson, p. 215).

As will be shown later, bargaining interactions in all research, except determinant solution, inherently involve argument<sub>2</sub> because making offers and counteroffers is defined as the conflict or disagreement in the situation. Conversational or discourse analysis of negotiation using an argument<sub>2</sub> perspective will be discussed extensively in a later section.

#### Argument as Cognition

Dale Hample's conception of argument as cognition, argument<sub>0</sub>, focuses on the intrapersonal evaluation of values. The mental processes involved in argument<sub>0</sub> are extensive. Hample includes:

Everything involved in 'thinking out' an argument: the perceptual and inferential experience of noticing an argument or the need for one; the memorial processes of storage, retrieval, and reconstruction of pertinent cognitive elements; the information processing which is applied to the argument and its potential parts; the creative energies that generate new arguments or responses to them; and the productive abilities that gives form to utterance (1985, p. 2).

Hample does not intend argument<sub>0</sub> to replace or reject either argument<sub>1</sub> or argument<sub>2</sub>. Rather, argument<sub>0</sub> is the foundation on which the other

arguments are built, "argument<sub>0</sub> generates argument<sub>1</sub> and argument<sub>2</sub>, and is manifest in both their structure and outward appearance" (1985, p. 11). Restated, argument<sub>0</sub> is the private process of the arguer who either recognizes the statement as argument<sub>1</sub>, and/or disagrees with the statement and engages in an argumentative interaction, argument<sub>2</sub>.

### Argument in Context

Field theory allows for both micro and macro level analyses of arguments because fields recognize that the context in which an argument is made impacts upon the argument's formation and validity. Even though argumentation scholars have different means for identifying a field, most authors consider its ontology to be "sociological." For example, when Stephen Toulmin introduced the idea of argument fields in The Uses of Argument, he defined the concept as the **context** or **forum** in which an argument is made (1958, pp. 36-37). In a later work, he equates intellectual disciplines with fields (1979, pp. 14-16). Charles A. Willard identifies a field as a "sociological entity . . . a constellation of practices around one or a few dominant assumptions" (1982, p. 28). Willard also emphasizes that these practices are produced by real people with real effects. Restated, an argument field is more than an abstract notion: it informs and is informed by the argumentation and reasoning used by people in an actual persuasive situations.

In field theory arguments need not conform to **formal logic** in order to be considered rational. That is, the context supplies **field dependent** values which are acceptable in a particular field; while global values which are deemed appropriate in all fields are called **field invariant**. In order to judge if arguments are in the same field and can be evaluated by the same standards, Toulmin provides the following criteria, "Two arguments will be said to belong to the same field when the data and conclusion in



each of the two arguments are, respectively, of the same logical type: they will be said to come from different fields when the backing or the conclusion in each of the two arguments are not of the same logical type" (1958, p. 14). For example, when a judge imposes a back to work order, the decision is deemed rational if it follows the rules of jurisprudence. However, if striking workers decide to return work (independent of a judge's order) their decision is judged rational if the benefits, either economic or relational, are deemed to outweigh the costs of the decision.

In summary, this section has explained several current argumentation perspectives. The perspectives differ over the nature and function of arguments, as well as the type of rationality appropriate for evaluating the arguments. Each argumentation perspective will be evident in at least one of the negotiation studies to be reviewed. But often multiple perspectives will be found operating in the same type of negotiation research. The desirability of multiple perspectives will be discussed in the appropriate sections.

## TRADITIONAL NEGOTIATION STUDIES

### Determinant Solution Bargaining

Bargaining researchers first focused their attention on game theory. Game theory is a mathematical, economic-based model for explaining strategic behavior. The theory is prescriptive because it predicts how a rational person should act in a bargaining situation. Determinant solution means that there is only one single, predictable settlement which **maximizes gains and minimizes losses**. In brief, game theory assumes humans are **rational** actors who make bargaining **moves** based upon their ability to recognize this determinant solution. Furthermore each bargainer is presumed

to have **perfect knowledge** about both parties' payoffs (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981, pp. 7-10). It is this assumption of complete information that has significant implications for argument's role in determinant solution games, as Bacharach and Lawler state, "The parties have no opportunity to influence each other's control, and they have all the information they need to anticipate each other's choices" (p. 8).

The impact of Bacharach and Lawler's statement is best understood when considering the reasoning process assumed by game theorists (pp. 9-10). Specifically, rational actors use a deductive reasoning process in which they determine the outcome based upon each party's utility functions. An important aspect of this process is that **environmental conditions** are what influences a bargainer in his/her assignment of utilities, rather than the **bargaining interactions**. Because the determination of moves is strategically preprogrammed and both parties (theoretically) act rationally, they will both move to the settlement point on their first move. Consequently, the role of argumentation and reason giving in determinant solution games is minimal. There is no need to try to gain adherence from your opponent for your own position because the opponent, as a knowledgeable, rational individual, can calculate your own utilities and determine where the best joint payoff is. Restated in terms of the argumentation perspective,  $argument_0$  is dominant because players cognitively determine the payoffs.  $argument_1$ , making  $argument_1$ , and  $argument_2$  would only be important if they interfere the determination of with utility preferences. And of course, such interference would be irrational.

#### Mixed Motive Bargaining

Conflict researcher Thomas C. Schelling (1960/1980), among others, modified the assumptions of game theory to create mixed motive bargaining. In mixed motive bargaining participants can use both cooperative and

competitive moves in order to achieve a negotiated outcome. Sequences of moves are needed to reach a settlement because people are not assumed to have complete knowledge of each other's utilities.

The assumption that humans are rational, maximizing actors remains, but rationality is not based exclusively upon the mathematical calculation of utilities. Rationality includes the evaluation of many complex factors. Walton and McKersie discuss how factors such as the type of issues, bargaining history, and constituencies, have their own criteria for rationality which confound the other system's activities. Consequently Walton and McKersie conclude that rationality in bargaining should be considered **subjectively** rational instead of objectively rational as in game theory (1965, p. 354). Because of these new assumptions "winning" in bargaining takes on a new meaning. Schelling states, "Winning" in a conflict does not have a strictly competitive meaning; it is not winning relative to one's adversary. It means gaining relative to one's own value system; . . ." (p. 4).

Based upon the previous description, one can see that the nature and function of argument in mixed motive bargaining involves argument<sub>0</sub>, argument<sub>1</sub>, and argument<sub>2</sub>. Specifically, the cognitive decisions to cooperate or compete are based upon the intrapersonal evaluation of values and belief. This "private mental bargaining" constitutes arguments<sub>0</sub> as a person determines what moves will satisfy his/her needs. The verbalization of demands and offers reveals argumentative discourse which can be analyzed as argument<sub>2</sub> or either form of argument<sub>1</sub>. But a more subtle form of argumentation exists in the bargaining moves. The actual moves are an arguments<sub>1</sub>, because moves are considered tacit communication in mixed motive bargaining (Schelling, pp. 74-77). Tacit bargaining uses subtle nonverbal cues and other behaviors to communicate a bargainer's intention without explicitly stating them. As tacit communication, the

moves (usually a sequence of moves) "argue" for a bargaining position. Thus, through tacit communication it is possible to **explicate** an argument<sub>1</sub> to your partner. Furthermore, the sequence of moves is the interaction which expresses the disagreement between the parties; hence, performs as argument<sub>2</sub>. I will use three frequently discussed bargaining strategies to illustrate how move sequences function as argument<sub>1</sub> and argument<sub>2</sub>. The strategies include: toughness, tit for tat, and reformed sinner (Folger & Poole, 1984, pp. 32-34).

The **toughness** strategy consists of an extreme opening demand and relatively few concessions of a very small magnitude. A bargainer who wishes to express domination and power over the opponent in hopes of discouraging the opponent sufficiently so (s)he gives in first will use the toughness strategy. In **tit for tat**, the opponent matches whatever move was made by the other bargainer. This strategy can induce cooperation or a conflict spiral depending upon the actions of the first player. To illustrate, if Player 1 opens with a cooperative move which is met with a cooperative move then this should encourage Player 1 to continue making cooperative moves. But if the game begins with a competitive move and then a competitive move is returned, an increase in conflict is likely. Finally, the **reformed sinner** pattern is used to encourage an uncooperative opponent to begin cooperating so both parties may have increased outcomes. This pattern consists of initial competitive moves and then cooperative moves which demonstrate that a bargainer can cooperate, but cautions that if those moves are not reciprocated, the bargainer can punish his/her opponent.

In conclusion, argument<sub>0</sub> occurs as bargainers cognitively evaluate their needs and values in order to determine strategic moves. Then, the bargaining moves function as argument<sub>1</sub> to persuade the opponent to make certain moves. The patterns of moves and countermoves represent the overt.

extended disagreement between the bargainers, and thus reveal the role of argument<sub>2</sub>. Additionally, the rationality of a move is subjectively determined in accordance to the bargainer's needs, as opposed to being judged rational according to a prescriptive, deterministic solution. In other words, the quality of a negotiated agreement is judged relative to one's own value system, rather than in accordance with a mathematical formula.

### Social Psychological Studies

Most current negotiation research falls into the social psychological tradition (Druckman, 1977, pp. 15-44). Social psychological studies are interdisciplinary and encompasses research which looks at both motivational and cognitive processes during negotiations. The motivational issues are taken from game theory and reflect the players' interest in the outcomes. It still is assumed, for example, that bargainers will try to maximize gains and minimize losses through the optimal use of competitive and cooperative moves. Thus, the tacit argument<sub>1</sub> still exists. The cognitive processes explain how the negotiators' ideological orientation influences their moves; thus allowing for continued application of argument<sub>0</sub>. And since there are multiple moves by the bargainers, they can engage in argument<sub>2</sub>. Furthermore, social psychological studies often use simulated mixed motive bargaining situations to determine how person, role, and situational variables determine bargaining behavior. In virtually all of these studies, however, behavior is still conceptualized as calculated moves rather than linguistic, reason giving arguments.

Recent work by Bacharach and Lawler (1981) clearly identifies an interest in argument per se; thus, representing a transition from implicit to explicit treatment of argument in bargaining research in the social

psychological perspective. The primary focus of Bacharach and Lawler's research is the operation of power in bargaining. While the investigation of power is not a new focus for bargaining researchers, the attention to how arguments communicate power is new.

Bacharach and Lawler define arguments as "justifications, explanations, rationalizations, or legitimizations that parties give for the positions they take in bargaining" (p. 157). Based upon this definition, more substantive analyses are possible because arguments<sub>1</sub> are now linguistic claim-making, reason-giving acts, rather than move sequences which function as tacit communication. Also, researchers also can study making arguments<sub>1</sub> if the claims and reasons are explicitly stated. Also, the attention given to strategic reason-giving demonstrates the role of invention in the creation of bargaining arguments. From a traditional Aristotelian perspective, Bacharach and Lawler's classification of arguments and modes of argumentation represents topoi from which a person can build a tactical bargaining plan. Specifically, Bacharach and Lawler present two types of arguments, **power** and **normative**, which are arguments<sub>1</sub>. The function of power arguments is "to manipulate the other's perception of the power relationship" so to maximize the probability of success (p. 168). Normative arguments deal with acceptable bargaining actions as prescribed by "commonly recognized standards of behavior" and are subclassified as equity, equality, or responsibility appeals (pp. 174-176). A very important aspect of power and normative arguments is that they are premised on different philosophical foundations which result in alternative criteria for judging rationality. Power arguments follow utilitarian rules of self interest; whereas, normative arguments refer to altruistic standards that are external to the bargaining issue under discussion and should be adhered to by both parties.

Based upon the bargaining power of each party, Bacharach and Lawler posit several hypotheses as to what type of argument (power or normative) will be used. The following example is one of their hypotheses: "If the total bargaining power in the relationship is very high, both parties will use equality appeals" (p. 176). Similar propositions are presented for equity and normative appeals. I believe scholars interested in argument invention strategies in negotiations will find these hypotheses useful. The hypotheses could be tested by content analyzing bargaining transcripts. In addition, a researcher could do a qualitative analyses which could provide insight into how negotiators strategically develop their arguments and if argument rationality changes across time. One limitation of such a research program is that the narrow and reductionistic nature of the scheme makes it is difficult to understand the broad, overarching implications of negotiations. The studies discussed in the next section attempt to avoid reductionism by moving back and forth between micro level arguments and the larger negotiation context.

### **CURRENT TRENDS IN BARGAINING ARGUMENT RESEARCH**

Communication researchers are at the forefront in the development of two new approaches for studying negotiation arguments. These approaches, conversational argument and argument fields, represent explicit attempts to study the nature and function of arguments in the negotiation process. In this section I will discuss and critique the applicability of conversational argument and argument fields as theoretical frameworks for organizational bargaining.

#### **Conversational Argument**

In a recent essay, Donohue, Diez, and Stahle (1983) propose the use of conversational argument theory and discourse analytic methods to study bargaining interactions. Specifically, they suggest that Jacobs and

Jackson's work in conversational argument can provide insight into "the nature of the linguistic performance called negotiation"; insight that is not possible if one uses a debate or public speaking model of argumentation (pp. 249-255).

In general, Jacobs and Jackson's conversational argument theory is a theory of argument in interaction, or argument<sub>2</sub>. That is, argument is an extended disagreement which regulates conversational events to obtain or avoid agreement, to accept or reject offers, and so on (1982, pp. 221-223). Within this emergent argumentative interaction, Jacobs and Jackson acknowledge, a party's utterance may qualify as an argument<sub>1</sub> or the making of argument<sub>1</sub>; but they specifically exclude the role of argument<sub>0</sub>. "Argument is not a process whereby a single individual privately arrives at a conclusion; it is a procedure whereby two or more individuals publicly arrive at agreement" (p. 215). Consequently, argumentation involves multiple interactants seeking to manage differences.

Conversational analysis of bargaining arguments focuses initially on adjacency pairs which are the basic organizational unit in a conversation. The first utterance in an adjacency pair is referred to as the first pair part (FPP) and the second utterance is the second pair part (SPP). Insofar as people want to reach an agreement they will provide appropriate SPP's to FPP's. The reasonableness, or rationality, of a SPP is determined by its compliance with the felicity conditions for this particular type of interaction. Other structural conditions of conversations which are used to analyze negotiations are turn-taking and expansion sequences. Turn-taking refers to the management and control of a speaker's turn at talking and the length of the utterance. Expansion sequences regulate how argumentative sequences develop in the conversation. Common forms of



expansion sequences includes presequencing, embedding, post-expansions and nonsequential forms of adjacency pairs (Donohue, et al., 1983, pp. 256-257).

The emphasis on structural aspects of arguments clearly shows that the research program advocated by Donohue, et al., involves micro level analyses of utterances and responses. Furthermore, these authors believe such a micro level focus will enable researchers to determine how certain speech acts contribute to conflict management. This information on speech act selection is used in conjunction with information management, contextual influences, and relational issues to give an overall picture of the negotiation process. Most important, this research program suggests that negotiations are more similar to conversations, due to the emergent production of arguments, than to either debates, where the propositions are fixed, or public speaking, where arguments are determined through invention. The authors do expect there to be some differences in conversational rule use between formal negotiations and informal conversational argument (p. 260).

But it is precisely the difference between informal conversational arguments and formal negotiations in the invention of arguments which severely limits the usefulness of conversational argument in explaining negotiations in labor-management relations. While I agree that arguments can be produced cooperatively in interaction and that speech act and conversational arguments theories can provide information about linguistic choices in negotiations, any analysis which excludes or neglects the role of invention describes only conflict management in a conversation, not strategic choice in the negotiation of a joint decision.

The distinction between conversational conflict management and bargaining is premised upon argument's point of origin. As previously noted, conversational argument theory posits that individuals prefer agreement. When an inappropriate second pair part is given, the conversational rules are broken and disagreement/argument results. Thus, conversational arguments manage **emergent** conflict; they do not recognize that disagreement can exist prior to interaction. The inherent nature of negotiations, especially labor-management relations, runs counter to this theoretical assumption. Negotiations are inherently adversarial. Disagreements exist **prior** to any bargaining communication. While there may be a few points on which the parties do agree before negotiation, there is an expectation that the parties disagree about significant portions of the contract. Without this adversarial element the very foundation of collective bargaining is undermined. What this pre-existing conflict means for analyzing argument is that the parties develop **strategic** arguments before engaging in face-to-face negotiations. Thus invention is tremendously important to bargainers, as is evident in the plethora of prescriptive techniques for preparing for labor management negotiations, (for example see Brock, 1982; Commerce Clearing House, 1979; and Walton & McKersie, 1965).

In summary, the strength of Donohue's et al. research program is its investigation into how micro level interactions are structured in negotiations. However, conversational argument has greater application for the study of interpersonal negotiations than for labor-management negotiations. The inapplicability is because the theoretical foundations of conversational argument reflect the emergent nature of interpersonal conversations, but is incongruent with the strategic nature of labor relations.

### Argument Fields

The identification of labor management bargaining as an **argumentation field** by Linda E. Putnam and Patricia Geist is an important step in negotiation research (1985). Using their study for illustrative purposes I will explain how the invention, use, and consequences of bargaining arguments can be better understood within the conceptual framework of argument fields than with previously discussed argumentation concepts. Specifically, I believe grounding a theory of bargaining arguments in fields is beneficial because: (1) Fields recognize that arguments are micro level interactions influenced by gestalt, sociological (macro level) influences; and (2) Rationality in fields can be context specific. Although Bacharach and Lawler and the conversational argument theorists acknowledge gestalt influences upon argument development, argument fields makes an explicit connection between the "context" in which an argument is made and the subsequent form and validity of the argument.

Labor-Management Negotiations as an Argument Field. Toulmin, Rieke and Janik identify four criteria which can be used to determine if a "sociological entity" is a field: (1) degree of formality, (2) degree of precision, (3) mode of resolution, and (4) goal of argumentation (1979, pp. 195-202). Putnam and Geist (pp. 229-230) used these criteria to distinguish labor-management bargaining as a field from other forms of decision making and conflict management. They identified the following important distinctions:

- (1) In negotiation the method of argumentation is less formal than group decision-making meeting conducted through the use of parliamentary procedures. But it is more formal than group discussion in that it relies on preset written proposals and counterproposals.

(2) What makes a "good" or acceptable argument may differ across forums. Semantics or contract language is very critical to the negotiation process. Participants must consider all possible interpretations . . . . Word choice, phrasing, and implication of phrasing are all considered in terms of legality.

(3) Negotiation begins with a similar adversarial relationship (as a of court law) yet resolution is reached by exchanging proposals and counter proposals to build agreement. The exchange process is not necessarily aimed at compromise or consensus, but at finding a midpoint of interpretation by which to achieve a solution. This process represents a very different mode of resolution than seeking a verdict.

(4) In negotiation, the two parties have opposite goals. . . . Built into the bargaining are conflicts of interest based on mutually exclusive goals. . . . Both teams must argue within this arena. Proposals, issues, and arguments reveal the nature of these differing goals of argumentation.

Once a field has been identified, it may be classified as a specific type. Willard (1981, p. 26) suggests a typology of four argument fields of which two are relevant to labor management negotiations. They are **relational** and **issue** fields. Relational fields include sustained clusters of encounters between spouses, friends, lovers, and professional colleagues. Significantly, the background assumptions of arguments in relational fields are features of the long term ongoing interactions which make up the relationship. Issue fields, or schools of thought, are larger groupings based upon paradigms or positions on issues.

In general, labor relations is a relational field because it involves repetitive interactions between professional colleagues (albeit adversaries). That is, the parties make arguments based upon the history of the relationship and the rituals which have been established. The labor relations literature is full of narratives about customary "theatrical" performances that are an accepted and expected part of the bargaining process (Walton & McKersie, 1965). Yet, in some instances bargaining arguments reflect an issue field, or a particular school of thought, about the proper nature of labor relations, especially in public employee labor relations. One current issue is whether public employees should have the right to strike. The positions vary depending upon if you believe public employees are public servants ensuring the public's interest and well being, or that public employees are no different from private employees and should have the same bargaining rights (Zagoria, 1972).

Arguments and Rationality Standards. After identifying labor management negotiations as a field, Putnam and Geist conduct a micro level analysis of argument types and functions in teachers' negotiations. Two important developments emerge from their study. The first significant aspect is their definition of argumentation, "Argumentation is . . . the communication process aimed at presenting statements and providing reasons why the audience should believe them" (Craib cited in Putnam & Geist 1985, p. 230). This definition represents "making an argument<sub>1</sub>" as opposed to just an argument<sub>1</sub>. That is, it is not enough to have explicable reasons for a claim as is the case with argument<sub>1</sub>: rather, the reasons have to be stated explicitly according to the criteria for making an argument<sub>1</sub>.

The examination of explicitly stated claims could increase a study's reliability and validity. Reliability is increased because it is easier to

identify what is an argument. Previous research has reported difficulties in distinguishing information statements and arguments (Keough, 1984; and Putnam & Jones, 1982b). Research findings can have greater validity since explicitly stated reasons have clearer meanings than implicit statements. However, one possible disadvantage is that the negotiators may not want to make their reasons explicit, as often occurs when bargaining before constituents (Carnevale, Pruitt, & Britton, 1979; Carnevale, Pruitt, & Seilheimer, 1981; Frey & Adams, 1972; Klimoski, 1972; Klimoski & Ash, 1974; Pruitt, 1981; and Walton & McKersie, 1965).

The second important development from Putnam and Geist's study is their analysis of how different types of claims and reasoning shape the direction of the bargaining process. It should be noted that the typology of claims and reasoning also are based upon Toulmin's work, specifically his model of argument: claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifiers, and rebuttal (1958, pp. 99-105). Toulmin's argument model is distinct--yet complementary--to his fields concept. For example, recall the earlier discussion of field invariant and field dependent values. The determination of these values is judged upon the kind of backing (reasoning) used in the argument.

The analysis of claims and reasoning produced results which are significant for understanding what these parties accepted as evidence and a rational solution. Interestingly, Putnam and Geist found very little "hard data" or "facts" used to support claims; rather, the parties relied primarily upon reasoning from analogy, cause, and hypothetical example. Because the parties had a history of creative problem solving, Putnam and Geist suggest that this trusting relationship might have contributed to the acceptance of the other's claims.

But an interesting question now arises, Was the negotiated settlement rationally derived? Recall that in the argument as product perspective, argumentation scholars are not in agreement on the proper type of rationality; hence, rationality can be an objective formal logic or contextual and intersubjective. If one subscribes to the objective formal logic paradigm, this solution is nonrational since it is built upon trust, an emotion, rather than empirical data. But by embedding their definition argument definition within the fields perspective, Putnam and Geist are correct in using the negotiation's history/context as a field dependent standard of rationality.

To summarize, I believe the fields perspective offers a better theoretical framework to study organizational bargaining than the other perspectives. The strength of fields is its ability to analysis micro level arguments contextually, thus revealing how arguments are shaped by, and then reshape the negotiation context. Future research in negotiation fields should examine the epistemological function of negotiation arguments and organizational reality in order to better understand the impact negotiations have on organizational life.

Furthermore, the ability to determine rational arguments based upon context specific criteria should be of great interest to bargaining researchers for two reasons. First, it provides additional justification for abandoning traditional game theory assumptions about human rationality in favor of more "realistic" assumptions of bargaining behavior. For example, it is a commonly accepted belief in collective bargaining that trust and bargaining history are important "data" in the settlement of a contract. Walton and McKersie's concept of attitudinal structuring is the most frequently cited theoretical basis for this position (pp. 222-280).

Second, the notion of field dependent and field invariant values can help explain some of the variance when researchers try to compare diverse negotiation situations, such as international relations and salesperson/client interactions, in the attempt to develop a general theory of negotiations (Strauss, 1979). That is, field theory recognizes that different contexts will generate different standards of rationality and that researchers must be careful when making cross-field comparisons. But field theory also recognizes field invariant values which apply across fields. The search for field invariant values in labor negotiations is another area in need of future research.

### CONCLUSION

This essay responds to several calls for an explication of the theoretical basis of argument in negotiation research. Because "argument" can be operationalized in several ways, five current perspectives were utilized in order to extrapolate the definition of argument in the research: argument<sub>0</sub>, argument<sub>1</sub>, making argument<sub>1</sub>, argument<sub>2</sub>, and argument fields. Also, the nature of human rationality was presented because the evaluation of arguments needs to be based upon the appropriate conception of rationality. Objective standards of rationality are of most importance to the bargaining research in the determinant solution game theory tradition; and to a lesser degree, the mixed motive bargaining studies. But conceptions of rationality which are contextually based appear more relevant to nonlaboratory organizational bargaining as demonstrated by the Putnam and Geist study.

Just as the conceptions of rationality change when moving from simulated to genuine negotiations, so does the nature and function of argument. As the negotiation situations became more complex, more



conceptions of argument were appropriate. For example, once multiple moves were allowed it was possible to have argument<sub>1</sub> and making argument<sub>1</sub> embedded in argument<sub>2</sub>. Depending upon your position on the argument<sub>0</sub>-argument<sub>2</sub> debate it may, or may not be, possible to have both of those arguments in the same series of interactions.

Once it is known how a researcher defines argument, it is then possible to judge how the definition impacts upon his/her discussion of the bargaining process. The impact of the operationalization of argument in Bacharach and Lawler's writings and in Putnam and Geist's study were the most clear and direct. Bacharach and Lawler have an "advanced" social psychological perspective which recognizes linguistic reason giving, but only to the extent it alters the opponent's perception of power. Putnam and Geist's definition of argumentation reflected making argument<sub>1</sub> and has the potential for increasing reliability through clearer distinctions of what is, and is not, an argument. Whether the validity of research improves depends upon how open the negotiators are with the "real" reasons for their positions. Finally, Putnam and Geist used criteria set out by Toulmin, et al., to identify labor-management negotiations as a distinct field. This designation provides the foundation for future organizational negotiation research to study the strategic invention of arguments, contextual and global values, and negotiation's impact upon organizational reality.

While this essay has looked at the nature and function of argument in organizational bargaining research, similar analyses of argument in other arenas of bargaining research are needed in order to draw more valid conclusions about the form and function of argumentation and human rationality in negotiations. The plethora of disciplines which conduct negotiation research provides ample data for this research effort.

## Reference Notes

1. The terms "negotiation" and "bargaining" are used synonymously in this essay. While some authors make distinctions between the terms, the distinctions are not consistent, and the process underlying negotiation or bargaining is virtually the same. See also Putnam and Jones, (1982b).

2. Commerce Clearing House (1979) provides clear definitions which explain the differences between arbitration and mediation. Arbitration is when a neutral third party decides a settlement for two parties who have reached an impasse in bargaining. Mediation is when a third party tries to help the bargaining parties reach an agreement. A mediator has no power to dictate a settlement. Bargaining is a "communicative process characterized by the exchange of information, arguments, and strategic maneuvers" (Putnam and Jones, 1982b) which leads to a joint decision.

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