
Managing Editor's Note

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The articles in this issue ask us to consider new questions and revisit old assumptions. The issue opens by introducing a new tool for measuring conflict anxiety and concludes by proposing a novel concept for improving the practice of mediation. Along the way, contributors analyze an alternative to the “first offer” opening tactic and present a framework for understanding the role of uncertainty in negotiation.

“Conflict” and “anxiety” may well be considered watchwords for our times. Noting that the more popular conflict style assessments—such as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument and the Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory—neglect the effects of anxiety and other emotions in conflict, Peter T. Coleman and Anthea Chan offer a new assessment tool, the Conflict Anxiety Response Scale (CARS). In “Conflict + Anxiety = Turmoil! Introducing a Measure of Conflict Response Derailers,” Coleman and Chan describe a multi-year process of developing and testing the CARS, which is based on a model derived from the clinical observations of the eminent psychologist Morton Deutsch. After providing an overview of their previous scale development studies, the authors present findings from two recent studies that examine the factor structure, reliabilities, and predictive validity of the current version of the CARS. The authors hope that the development and use of the CARS will help individuals, couples, and families increase their awareness of each person’s chronic conflict derailment tendencies—the tendencies identified as common manifestations of anxiety management in conflict—and provide them with information to enhance personal and professional development, self-awareness, and well-being.

Much has been written—in this journal and elsewhere—about the “first offer” in negotiation. In “‘What is Your Best Price?’—An Experimental Study of an Alternative Negotiation Opening,” Wolfram Lipp, Peter Kesting, and Remi Smolinski consider the effects of starting a negotiation with a question rather than an offer. Their study examines how asking “What is your best price?” affects the first offer, predicts the final negotiation outcome, and influences negotiation behavior. Examining the best-offer question is vital for three reasons: it is a logical

alternative to the offer-counteroffer sequence, it is frequently used in the field, and it could affect the course of negotiations and their results. The authors encourage further research of the best-price question to understand and use its full potential in both distributive and integrative negotiations and to assess its ethical implications. Research into the most advantageous methods of responding to the best-price question is also recommended.

Uncertainty—another watchword for our times—is the focus of our next article, which moves us from research to theory. In “Nine Degrees of Uncertainty in Negotiation,” Marco Schauer, Johann M. Majer, and Roman Trötschel develop a framework of uncertainty in negotiation using the COVID-19 vaccine supply negotiations between the European Union and pharmaceutical companies as an example. The authors differentiate between three natures of uncertainty (lack of knowledge, unpredictability, and interpretations) and three objects of uncertainty (issue-based, strategy-based, and context-based). Each of these uncertainties can prolong negotiations or lead to an impasse; in high-stakes negotiations like the COVID-19 vaccine supply negotiations, they can have life or death consequences. The article provides practitioners, negotiation teachers, and researchers with an understanding of how uncertainties affect the negotiation process and proposals for dealing with them. If we have learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that dealing effectively with uncertainty is critical in all aspects of our personal and professional lives, including negotiations.

The final article in the issue turns the focus from negotiation to mediation. In “The Mediating Alliance,” Laura Pujol, Immaculada Armadans, Francisco J. Medina, Lourdes Munduate, and M. Teresa Anguera propose the novel concept of the “mediating alliance”—a framework in which cooperative interaction occurs—as a factor underlying the effectiveness of the mediation process. After reviewing the conceptual framework of Bordin’s “working alliance,” the authors discuss the contributions of the “mediating alliance” concept to the theory, methodology, and practice of mediation. Defining the mediating alliance as “the cooperative relationship between the mediator and the parties in mediation,” they seek to show the concept’s utility in providing a new integrating concept based on research on success factors related to the goals, tasks, and bonds in the mediation process. The authors hope to contribute to the development of strategies for effective communication in the mediation process and to the improvement of mediator training.

We hope that the articles in this issue encourage you to pursue novel areas of research, revisit established theories, and imagine new ways of understanding, managing, and resolving the conflicts that suffuse our world.