Teaching Note

Electronic Negotiation: A Teaching Tool for Encouraging Student Self-Reflection

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As the amount of negotiation taking place electronically increases, the responsibility of negotiation instructors to prepare students to successfully operate in electronic environments grows. We believe that skills related to electronic negotiation — like many other negotiation skills — are best taught by providing students opportunities to gain first-hand experience followed by self-reflection. For the past five years, we have used an electronic negotiation exercise to allow students to personally experience the complexities associated with negotiations completed exclusively over the Internet. Further, with the use of e-mail and instant messaging, a powerful record emerges: a complete transcript of the negotiation encounter. After describing the preparation and structure of this exercise, we explain how to harness the power of this vehicle to lead students to significant insights through self-reflective activities.

Key words: negotiation instruction, electronic negotiation, self-reflection, Internet, cross-cultural negotiation.

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Teaching Self-Reflection: An Educational Challenge

> Men go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering.
>
> — *St. Augustine*

As suggested by St. Augustine, one of life's greatest challenges may be understanding oneself. Like others who teach negotiation courses (Bunker, Kram, and Ting 2002), we often encounter students who appear to have minimal self-reflective skills.[1] This paucity of skills often results in students' overconfidence about their own abilities to navigate the negotiation process. Because both correctly calibrating confidence in oneself as well as developing understanding of others — two key skills in negotiation — require thoughtful reflection, we have become strong advocates of teaching tools aimed at increasing negotiation students' self-awareness and self-development.

In this article, we describe one such teaching tool, an electronic negotiation simulation. Although a number of teaching tools assist in the development of students' reflective skills, this one has been particularly effective in our classes. We have been using the electronic negotiation exercise for the past five years and continue to do so because it addresses one of our primary challenges as negotiation instructors: creating a learning context for students in which they are encouraged to expand their underdeveloped set of self-reflective skills. This experiential exercise, a cross-cultural negotiation simulation conducted solely over electronic mail, is the basis for a series of dialogues we use to encourage introspection and self-development on the part of our students and ourselves. We refer to the reflective component of our classes as an opportunity for students to "look into the mirror" — that is, to engage in a process of learning about themselves, both as negotiators and as individuals, in ways they may never have done before.

We begin with an overview of our cross-cultural electronic negotiation exercise and its goals. Next, we describe how to run the exercise and provide a list of helpful hints gleaned from years of practice. We then explain our debriefing method, summarize our findings, and discuss their implications. Finally, we share ideas about how others might further develop or extend this exercise to meet their own teaching objectives.

Our Pedagogical Goals

As Robert McKersie and Nils Fonstad (1997) noted, the increasing use of e-mail for negotiation requires that we, as instructors, prepare students to perform better in that environment. Our first goal in developing this exercise was to create a situation where electronic negotiation would be necessary (e.g., the parties would be separated geographically). Otherwise, we feared that students on the same campus could circumvent the exercise by arranging to speak face-to-face.

Next, we sought to inject a sense of realism that can wane over the course of a semester as students in class get to know each other well (Lempereur 2002). As each semester progresses, and students tend to develop friendships and higher levels of comfort with each other, we often find that our simulations become more like friendly games for our students rather than exciting negotiations. We hoped that matching our students with strangers at another university would reignite a sense of realism and nervous excitement for students. To further enhance the realism, we sought to reduce our direct influence on the process and outcomes. In other words, many negotiation instructors try to model the behavior of a principled negotiator in class by adopting a very cooperative approach in discussions (Lempereur 2002). Consequently, it seems likely that students negotiating in class may mimic this behavior. Removing the professor from the environment during the simulation can thus, we believe, enhance the simulation's realism. Further, after having used cases that ask students to play the role of someone from another culture, we thought we could increase the authenticity of an international case by having them actually negotiate with someone from another culture. Finally, we wanted to expose students to the complexities of asynchronous communications (Weiss 2005) so that they would see both the advantages (e.g., ability to cool off, edit thoughts before presenting, make calculations and strategize openly) and disadvantages (e.g., lack of nonverbal cues, frustration while waiting for/hoping for/wondering about a response, anxiety that builds between responses) of this format.

Admittedly, we did not initially anticipate the benefit of having the complete transcript of the negotiation encounter. That insight came during a debriefing of the exercise in class the first year when a student pulled out a transcript of her electronic negotiation to emphasize a key point — providing a "eureka" moment for us. Since then, we have required that all students keep and submit a complete transcript of their negotiation. This tool has increased the value of the exercise and shifted our primary goal to focus on the insights to be gained from self-reflections that are less biased by memory and more rooted in reality.

Use of the transcript has increased the saliency and applicability of theoretical concepts by making them "real" for students, creating more opportunities for reflection in the process. Careful examination of the transcript has enabled students to see the real-world implications of such theoretical frameworks as Leigh Thompson and Janice Nadler's (2002) e-mail negotiation biases (e.g., temporal synchrony bias, burned bridge bias). (These are discussed more fully later in the article.) Another concept that students appear to more readily grasp in this format is the idea that people tend to communicate differently (e.g., more direct, more competitive, more critical) using e-mail than they would in face-to-face situations (Kurtzberg, Naquin, and Belkin 2005; Valley 2000).

Simulation Design

During the first two years, we used the Beverly Frills–Frigo exercise (an adapted version of an A-E-I paradigm case; see Bazerman and Neale [1991: 17] for discussion of this paradigm). Then we shifted to a modified version of the Les Florets case (Goldberg 1999; available from the Dispute Resolution Research Center at Northwestern University). Both cases are described briefly below.

The Beverly Frills–Frigo Exercise

The Beverly Frills–Frigo case is a classic buyer-seller exercise. The purchasing manager for Beverly Frills, an exclusive store selling household equipment, wants to negotiate a contract with the sales manager of Frigo, a producer of large, expensive refrigerators.

Three terms need to be negotiated: delivery date, number of product variations, and payment terms. The Beverly Frills manager naturally wants the product as soon as possible with the highest possible number of product variations while paying at the latest possible date. The Frigo manager, in contrast, wants to deliver at the latest reasonable date with no product variation and immediate payment.

Students often assume that each of these issues is equally important to the other party, although a payout matrix tells them that this is not the case. If students identify the differences between the two parties' preferences, then they can logroll the issues and expand the pie, but not all do so successfully. Because the case is quantifiable, by the end of the debriefing, students clearly see the value that can be created when they understand and prioritize the interests of both sides. The route students take to achieve an agreement varies. Some will attempt to negotiate item by item, an approach that rarely yields superior joint outcomes. Others will make single-package offers incorporating all three terms. And others will offer multiple packages simultaneously, which is generally the most efficient and effective approach. By iterating multiple times with offers and counteroffers, students are often able to maximize their points. The negotiation requires little creativity and the haggling script noted by Kathleen Valley (2000), in which negotiators tend to keep most of their information to themselves, is often observed.

The Les Florets Exercise

Les Florets is a two-party, quantified transactional negotiation with integrative potential. The owners of a restaurant want to sell it. The operators of a large restaurant chain want to buy it. The restaurant owners are tired of the responsibilities of ownership and hope to take a trip around the world while they are young and healthy enough to enjoy such a trip. The restaurant company is in the midst of a strategic expansion via buyouts. The critical lesson of this exercise is that there is no overlapping bargaining range unless the two parties use their information creatively to develop it. Thus, Les Florets exemplifies the importance of an integrative approach. Unless the parties share information about their long-term goals, a deal seems impossible. Further, the case is interest-driven on both sides. Interestingly, the restaurant owners have set a price for the restaurant based on their assessment of their financial needs for their sailing trip. In contrast, the restaurant company valued the restaurant based on their perception of its value, which is strongly influenced by their BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement), which would be paying the costs of building and opening a new restaurant in the area.

If the students withhold information about their underlying interests (e.g., the sailing trip), they will be unlikely to be able to craft an acceptable agreement. But communication around the interests can uncover ways to meet joint objectives (e.g., the restaurant owners will need income and employment security upon return, which could match the restaurant company's need to find good managers to enable their successful expansion).

We prefer Les Florets over Beverly Frills because it leads to more creative and divergent results, especially because, in the case of Les Florets, some students will usually follow a haggling script. Impasse is a likely result in Les Florets if students only discuss money, whereas negotiators can fall into a good solution in Beverly Frills through multiple offer/counteroffer sequences focused only on money.

Running the Exercise

Every year, we conduct this negotiation with undergraduate students enrolled in negotiation classes on opposite sides of the world. One of the classes is a fourteen-week negotiation course held at Bond University, located on the Gold Coast of Australia; the other class is a one-week advanced international negotiations course taught at the Institut d'Economic et de Gestion (IÉSEG) School of Management in northern France. (We have also run the exercise as part of a fifteen-week negotiation course at an American university.) The one-week course puts time constraints on the exercise. If there were no such constraints, we would offer a full week to complete the exercise as it typically takes students multiple "conversations" or "meetings" to resolve the case. Students have reported spending between one and eight hours total on the negotiation.

Ideally, we would have a similar number of students enrolled in each course as we assign students to a role and then present them with the e-mail address of their negotiation counterpart(s). But because there are always discrepancies in the class sizes (which have ranged from twenty-five students to sixty-six), we place students from the larger course in pairs, taking on the roles of either cobuyers or cosellers. We give students in these partnerships the option of either sitting together as they e-mail or asking all parties involved in the negotiation to use the "reply to all" key. Students in each class take on one role, with every student in the class given the same confidential instructions sheet. By only presenting one side of the case to students from the same university, unintended disclosure of confidential information is minimized. Also, because we have customized the case to the local context (e.g., locating a "Les Florets" restaurant on the Australian Gold Coast with local currency and valuation information), we have not varied the roles between the schools — the students in Australia are always the sellers and the students in France are always the potential buyers.

Over the years, we have found that it is important to clarify many details for students, especially because the simulation is international in nature and this is their first exposure to the associated complexities. Otherwise, technical difficulties can derail them. Following are lists of helpful hints for students and instructors:

Faculty Instructions to Students

- Be explicit about who should initiate the communication and when. For example, tell them that students at IÉSEG in Lille, France, will send e-mails to begin the conversation. This should take place on Tuesday, March 15, by 10 P.M. (Lille, France time). This means that students at Bond University in Australia should expect to see an e-mail on Wednesday, March 16, by 7 A.M.

- Set a clear stopping point. Tell the students that negotiations must be *completed* by 7:00 A.M. (Lille, France time) and 4:00 P.M. (Gold Coast, Australia time) on Friday, March 18. Note that the nine-hour time difference will impact when they are able to e-mail each other and that they must plan accordingly.

- Provide suggestions regarding technology and coordination details. Instruct them that it may help to set up "times" for negotiation where parties on both sides are sitting at their computers. They may use instant messaging if both parties have access, can agree upon an available time, and are comfortable using that medium.

- Clarify who will be at the table in each negotiation dyad. In some of the negotiations, there will be teams of students working together on one of the sides (e.g., a two-on-one negotiation.) As a result, they should hit "reply to all" every time they respond to an e-mail.

- Remind students about the necessity of creating the negotiation transcript for later analysis. Tell them they *must* turn in an electronic copy of their e-mail negotiations. They should keep a continuous record of their negotiations by hitting "reply" to each message. If they are negotiating with a pair of students, they will need to hit "reply to all" to keep everyone in the loop.

- Remind students about the time difference on multiple occasions.
- Clarify the common currency. Remind them, for example, that monetary amounts are in Australian (AUD) dollars.

Additional Tips for Instructors

- Develop a list of the students' preferred and verified e-mail addresses in advance.
- Carefully account for time differences, holidays, and other possible time-based barriers to completing the assignment.
- Customize the negotiation roles so that they make sense to readers in the different roles (e.g., adopt a common currency). Adding local language or geographic elements may enhance the realistic feel of the negotiation.
- Be strict with deadlines. Students who leave all the work until the last day/night may experience difficulty coordinating their schedules or coming to closure.
- Expect finger pointing and criticism of the "other" school's students (Lempereur 2002). Respond with respect for the other instructor and students, effectively modeling the most productive mindset for resolving complex, cross-cultural differences. Avoid being defensive of "your" students.
- Require students to submit the entire electronic negotiation transcript in hard copy, which can reduce finger pointing. Frame this component as a protective device for everyone involved, highlighting the fact that all electronic negotiations are permanently recorded (date and time) and students thus need to prepare carefully and start early.
- Check your e-mail often. Students who face difficulties making contact (e.g., e-mails bouncing back, no response) should be encouraged to e-mail you immediately. If both instructors check e-mail regularly, problems are typically solved quickly.
- Collect students' personal contact information (e-mail and phone, preferably mobile or cell phone numbers). Often one or two students will need to be contacted quickly to ascertain the status of their e-mail accounts or their participation in the negotiation.
- Frame the exercise as an innovative and unique opportunity that can serve as the capstone negotiation for an experientially based course on negotiations. Students are usually excited about negotiating with a complete

stranger situated on the other side of the world. They often view the exercise as a practical trial of their skills, similar to negotiation situations they will face as they progress through their careers.

- Allow students to opt out of the exercise. Some may simply not have the time to commit to this negotiation. In such instances, students will do more damage than good if they are forced to participate (negatively affecting their negotiation counterparts). Students in this situation are required to make up the exercise at a later date, ideally before all of the debriefing sessions are completed.

Results

In the Beverly Frills exercise, students calculate the point values they achieved for their role. We then provide information so they can correctly compute the points for their counterpart, and we ask them to report both scores and their sum on the chalkboard in the front of class. This presentation lends itself to an easy visual analysis of the best individual and joint outcomes. The results typically range from low total point values to Pareto optimal outcomes. Impasse rates range from 25 to 40 percent.

In the Les Florets exercise, we ask students to simply note the dollar value of the transaction. Students often chafe at this because so many achieve complex integrative deals. Students always ask if they can include additional details. After getting the attention of the class, we ask if anyone would like to report *additional* elements of their deals. Students flood back to the board to record their novel ideas. Interestingly, though this simulation is more complex than Beverly Frills, impasse rates have been somewhat lower (15 to 20 percent). Moreover, this rate of impasse is slightly lower than the rates observed when this same exercise has been run in a face-to-face format with undergraduate students. In short, our experience seems to square with work done by Rachel Croson (1999), who found that computer-mediated agreements are somewhat more integrative than those negotiated face to face, suggesting that there is no decrease in effectiveness when negotiating long distance using information technology.

Understanding the principles of social psychology is essential to understanding negotiation. Because negotiations reflect the dynamics of social interaction, the ability to understand egocentrism, motivation, perception, emotion, ethics, and cultural issues is critical to negotiation success (Bazerman et al. 2000). As educators, we would be remiss if we did not discuss the impact of these processes on negotiations. To give our students foundational knowledge of the relevant processes in social psychology, we begin the semester by introducing social psychological literature on conflict resolution (e.g., Deutsch 2002). We then discuss how social psychological processes operate and can affect negotiation outcomes.

Pre-Exercise Self-Reflection

Before the electronic negotiation, we give our students short exercises in reflection to focus their attention on the social psychological processes involved in negotiation. We use the Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) designed to assess their preferred bargaining style(s) (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, or accommodating) at the start of the semester. (Several instruments are designed for this type of analysis.) Although there has been considerable debate regarding the validity of personality tests more generally, we believe that such a tool helps provide a framework for reflection and analysis.

Once the students have completed the instrument, we typically present them with the Wharton–TKI Bargaining Styles Grid (as described in Shell 2001) so they can compare their scores with those of a large global sample of executives. We find that students enjoy the comparison, providing a useful first step in the process of self-discovery.

Immediately before this negotiation exercise takes place, we ask the students to engage in a reflective exercise aimed at uncovering their assumptions about the upcoming negotiation over the Internet. We ask them to:

1. List and describe three emotions you feel when you think about the upcoming negotiation (e.g., fear, anxiety, excitement). Be sure to explain why you are feeling each emotion.
2. List four words that might describe the person/people you are about to negotiate with (e.g., principled, difficult, friendly). For example, what word would you put at the end of the following sentence, "This person will most likely be ____." Please explain why you think each word may be appropriate.

Their answers are returned to the students during their postnegotiation debriefing.

Debriefing and Assessment

Following the electronic negotiation simulation, we ask students to prepare a journal entry that examines a number of key topics from the course. We then dedicate an entire class to discussion of students' journal entries. We first ask them to revisit their bargaining style preferences and to discuss how those preferences seem to apply to the transcripts of their electronic negotiations. We ask them to consider how their preferred style(s) influenced the way they managed the simulation. For example, if they have a strong predisposition toward accommodation, did they spend a lot of time discussing relationship issues, possibly to the point of frustrating the other side? How did they manage the logrolling process? Did they give away too much too early? How did their concessions compare with those of the other side? Each preferred bargaining style has both strengths and weaknesses (Lewicki, Saunders, and Barry 2006). We encourage students to search for both as they examine and reflect upon their e-mail transcripts.

There is little doubt that persuasion is key to achieving desired outcomes in negotiation (Cialdini 1993), and successful persuasion requires understanding ourselves and others. In today's world, business people must persuade others using electronic media (Hobson 1999). When debriefing the electronic negotiation with our students, we ask students to reflect upon three points raised by Michael Watkins (2001) in his discussion of effective persuasion at a distance. We ask them to reflect on their abilities to focus and repeat important communications, to simplify difficult concepts in accurate ways (watching out for oversimplification), and to build personal credibility. We describe the results of a study by Suzanne Weisband and Leanne Atwater (1999) that found that, when compared to face-to-face settings, students have irrationally high self-assessment ratings of their contributions to tasks in electronic interactions. This suggests a tendency for inflation bias when performing tasks electronically.

Using the Negotiation Transcripts

Another approach we use to encourage students to reflect on the electronic negotiation experience is a discussion of Jonathan Cohen's (2002) five topics related to negotiation (deception, disclosure, fairness, fidelity, and respect).[2] Students are asked to carefully review their own negotiation transcripts, highlighting and then reflecting in another journal entry upon the five topics. For example, students are asked to consider the extent to which they felt deceived (we ask this before they are given the other side's confidential information and then again after they read it) and the extent to which they themselves knowingly used deception. To follow up on that question, we put students in teams of two, each student then reads through the other student's transcript and gives feedback. Students are often shocked when their deceptions are pointed out to them. This type of assisted reflection encourages our students' self-discovery, giving them a chance to see how different our view of ourselves can be from the views of others.

From this intraclass dyadic feedback, we have anecdotally deduced some common themes. For many of our students, insights regarding the following assumptions have been particularly strong — sometimes achieved only after someone else has read their transcript — and tend to be consistent across student cohorts, regardless of the year, size of the class, or demographics of the students in the classes:

- *Having someone else read through his/her transcript will be an easy process because everyone involved is perfectly objective and rational*. In fact, most students are visibly distraught by the number of points raised and biases noted by the reflection dyad partner.

- *Their perceptions of themselves match those of the people they interact with*. Again, most students have a difficult time trying to "step into the shoes" of the other side, to see how one of their own statements might be interpreted as competitive or aggressive by the other side, even when it was not written with that intention.
- *Personal credibility, fairness, and an ethical approach to the negotiation are assumed and enacted by all*. Students tend to be relatively overconfident about their credibility and trustworthiness, to the extent that very few of them attempt to establish genuine rapport as a form of relationship building.

In terms of grading, instructors have wide latitude in how much to weigh these writing exercises. Because we view this case as one of the course cornerstones for self-development, we have generally allocated a relatively high weight to the journal entries (ranging from 20 to 40 percent of the final grade). Their successful integration of negotiation theory and the depth of the personal insight they demonstrate are the two factors that most affect the students' grades.

Findings and Implications

Electronic Communications

Rebecca Halyard and Brooke Pridmore have argued that electronic learning and electronic teaching have affected both how we teach and how students learn; calling the Internet "a student's third hand" (2000: 440). Students' high levels of comfort with electronic communication may explain why research has shown positive, critical-thinking-based results from the inclusion of Internet-based communication in the classroom (Dutt-Doner and Powers 2000) and higher overall rates of participation in class discussions when compared to those in face-to-face settings (Dubrovsky, Kiesler, and Sethna 1991; Kahmi-Stein 2000). Moreover, understanding issues related to the use of e-mail as a form of electronic communication continues to be a primary agenda item for business owners and employees (Kovach et al. 2000). Therefore, to educate our students in a comprehensive manner, negotiation courses must include the topic of electronic negotiations with particular focus on e-mail as a communication medium (McKersie and Fonstad 1997).

Our students participate in the e-mail negotiation before we discuss research on electronic communication. We find that learning is much richer for negotiation students when we follow an inductive approach of "involving, showing, and telling" where the first step is "simulation" (to involve students in negotiation simulations), the second step is "debriefing" (to interactively debrief the experience with the students, which may involve connection with theoretical concepts), and the final step is "summarizing" (to extend the debriefing to a discussion of how students' experiences relate to and reflect relevant theories) (Lempereur 2002: 17–18).

This process differs from a typical training program in which a "telling, showing, and then involving" process is the norm. We find that when we start with the actual simulation (e-mail negotiation), students tend to rely solely on their familiarity with e-mail and their relatively overconfident mindsets toward the ease of Internet-based negotiating (Lempereur 2002). Once the negotiation is complete, we share research findings.

The exponential growth in e-mail communication has prompted research on the topic of e-mail negotiation.[3] In our debriefing, we first present findings from empirical research in the domain, encouraging students to critically evaluate the findings in light of their electronic negotiation experiences. Specifically, we refer to several of the findings from Thompson and Nadler's (2002) summary of research on electronic negotiation. These include:

1. E-mail negotiations tend to feature much less "schmoozing" than face-to-face negotiations, resulting in less relationship-building and more task-focused communication (with less overall rapport reported between parties).
2. Rapport helps to engender positive emotion and trust.
3. Brief telephone calls prior to negotiating will help to develop cooperative relationships, positive emotions, and trust, thus leading to higher outcomes than strictly e-mail-based negotiations.
4. E-mail negotiations are more likely to include negative affect, lower rapport, and a higher impasse rate if the other negotiator is perceived as an out-group member than e-mail negotiations between perceived in-groups. (In our simulation, most students perceive the other party to be an out-group member, while other students in their class playing the same role represent the in-group).
5. Males negotiating with males tend to have less cooperative negotiations than mixed-sex dyads.
6. E-mail negotiations increase multi-issue offers (when compared to face-to-face negotiations).

We also discuss the e-mail negotiation biases Thompson and Nadler have uncovered in their research (students tend to find this discussion more compelling and "sexy" than the empirical findings listed above). The *temporal synchrony bias* is "the tendency for negotiators to behave as if they are in a synchronous situation when in fact, they are not" (Thompson and Nadler 2002: 117). We see this in almost every dyad that participates in the electronic negotiation. Our students become frustrated with the lack of predictability in response time and the uneven flow of communication. Students expect a patterned, stable, synchronous set of communications; for most e-mail negotiations that level of stability simply does not exist. The most common response from our students is frustration with the process, a powerful negative emotion that students are not likely to forget.

In their reflections related to the temporal synchrony bias, students reported their frustrations. One wrote, "We were not able to coordinate a time for a discussion (I wanted to do instant messaging) and then we didn't get a reply from the other negotiator for a full day." The process, wrote another "went WAY TOO SLOW!!!" One wrote that she "felt like the e-mails only covered one aspect of the negotiation at a time and there was too much time in between e-mails (given our time constraints to get it done)."

Thompson and Nadler (2002) characterize the *burned bridge bias* as the "tendency for e-negotiators to engage in risky interpersonal behaviors in an impoverished medium that they would not engage in when interacting face-to-face" (118). Our students often report the presence of this bias in conjunction with another bias, the *squeaky wheel bias*. The squeaky wheel bias is basically the tendency to use an "aversive emotional style" (118) over e-mail when a positive emotional style is the individual's preferred style in face-to-face negotiations. Many of our students report these biases and explain them as an extension of negotiating with people they do not know from the other side of the planet. Students often talk about their lack of relationship and, more importantly, their lack of *interest* in establishing a relationship with the other party, thus leading them to be more competitive, less cooperative, direct, and aggressive with their communications. They describe their frustration as catalyzing intimidating behavior and aggression; they justify these behaviors as required responses to communications from their negotiation counterparts.

"The other side offered me a deal and I accepted," explained one student. "They then came back to me and said the deal was not possible. I got really angry at their dishonesty, saying something pathetic like 'we can't sign a contract for this,' so I started playing hardball back." Another wrote that he "felt that they were being stubborn. They represent a successful management company and I think the part went to their heads . . . they assumed that they were correct about everything and became arrogant. I then had to respond in a similar fashion."

The *sinister attribution bias* is a tendency to misattribute behaviors to personal rather than situational factors. Thompson and Nadler describe this bias as "a type of mutation of the fundamental attribution error, wherein attributions of the other person's behavior are not only dispositional, but also diabolical" (2002: 119). As stated above, evidence indicates that people do, in fact, tend to be more competitive, expressing higher levels of negative emotion during e-mail negotiations than those in face-to-face settings. This bias, however, *irrationally* distorts an individual's perception of the other negotiator's competitive and aggressive behavior. Relating this back to our earlier points, we have found anecdotally that once our students begin to blame the other negotiator for a downward communication spiral, the sinister attribution bias kicks in and impasse becomes the most likely outcome.

One student wrote, "They simply couldn't understand what a time difference was . . . they kept thinking that 6 to 8 a.m. on the Gold Coast was 6 to 8 p.m. It was such an obvious mistake that I was SURE they did it intentionally to mess with me . . . I mean, come on! There are twelve hours not accounted for and the time difference was very clearly stated!" Another called her negotiation counterpart "a manipulator . . . never responding directly to our questions and always trying to make us uncomfortable when we made a mistake."

Students are seldom surprised when we report the research on trust in electronic negotiations (e.g., online negotiations are associated with lower levels of both pre- and postnegotiation trust than face-to-face negotiations (Naquin and Paulson 2003). It also comes as no surprise to them that the absence of rapport building, coupled with a focus on making rules (e.g., communicating "how" and "when" directives to the other party), results in highly negative perceptions in electronic negotiations (Paulson and Naquin 2004).

In future simulations that we run, we will also discuss the recent findings of Terri Kurtzberg, Charles Naquin, and Liuba Belkin (2005), who conducted three studies examining the relationship between e-mail communication and performance evaluation. The authors consistently found that evaluations of the other negotiator were significantly less positive over e-mail than when they were using a paper-based written format (in two of the studies, participants rated a negotiation teammate and in the third study they rated the performance of a negotiator as seen in a reenactment recorded on video). This outcome was explained by a reduction in perceived social obligation over e-mail; participants who evaluated another negotiator using an e-mail medium were less likely to feel "obligated" to the other person than those who were writing paper-based evaluations. This research certainly fits with our anecdotal evidence that students tend to be very critical of their negotiation counterparts in electronic negotiations.

Once we have reviewed the empirical literature with our students, we briefly turn to the executive practitioner literature where "tips" for negotiating online are presented (Casperson 2000; Halpern 2001; McGinn and Wilson 2004; Morris 1999; Valley 2000).

We find it useful to pool tips from different sources and to present them as discussion points for students in our classes. Some of the questions we raise at this point include, how do the tips relate to what they experienced in their negotiations? How could knowledge of the empirical literature on e-mail negotiation have helped their negotiation? Why would knowing some of the tips for negotiating over the Internet have helped them attain better outcomes? What lessons will they take away from this exercise and why?

Prior to the simulation, the students reported the following assumptions about electronic negotiation:

- Negotiation over the Internet will be quick.
- E-mail negotiations do not require as much planning as face-to-face negotiations do because there will be time between communications to think and prepare.
- The other negotiator will be continuously available during the three- to four-day negotiation period.

Their assumptions, of course, turned out to be largely incorrect. For example, the average time required for students to complete the simulation is three-and-a-half hours via instant messaging and three days over e-mail for a case that typically takes thirty-five minutes in a face-to-face setting. Students who report the second assumption about planning often share that they are regretful that they did not put more time and energy into preparation (given how hard the negotiation actually turned out to be for them). And, finally, with a nine-hour time difference, students quickly became aware of the logistical constraints placed on the pattern of responses.

Cross-Cultural Insights

One of our goals as negotiation teachers and negotiators is to understand how culture affects negotiation planning, process, and outcomes. While we believe that the electronic negotiation experience is sufficiently rich to warrant using it in classes that do not have a cross-cultural focus, we do believe that this approach is especially rich in an international context.

The strengths of this approach are obvious: we live in a world where negotiations increasingly involve people from different cultures. Negotiators should, as a result, develop an understanding of not only *what* cultural differences may exist between parties but also *how* existing differences may affect the inherently interpersonal process of negotiation. Such knowledge is difficult to attain, as most cultural differences stem from deeply held values that contribute to our perceptions of right and wrong. These perceptions can cause conflict stemming from differences in understanding and mixed interpretations of experience (Kahane 2003). Conflict stemming from cultural differences can be a powerful and informative experience. As many of us teach our students, conflict is not inherently bad; rather, it is poor handling of conflict (e.g., ignoring it or addressing it inappropriately) that leads to impasse and damaged relationships.

One way we like to approach the topic of culture in our classes is to first ask students to define what culture is *not*. We use an article by Kevin

Avruch as a springboard for this discussion, raising his six points that "culture is not: a homogeneous, essentialized, uniformly distributed, customary, timeless, and stable" phenomenon (2000: 343). This type of discussion stimulates an awakening for most students, a realization that culture is unstable and cannot be rigidly defined. In our discussions, we describe culture as a "lens" through which we view the world around us (Avruch 2000). We ask our students to define their own lenses and to search for similarities and differences with those who are from the same regional and national areas.

Before the negotiation, we ask students to describe three emotions that they feel about the upcoming negotiation and to list and explain four descriptor terms that they think will apply to the person/people with whom they will negotiate. Students typically expose some shared assumptions. One is that students in France must be French and students in Australia must be Australian. In fact, our universities have high percentages of international students; only 40 percent of students on the French campus are French and less than 40 percent of the students on the Australian campus are Australian. Student quotes frequently expose this belief. One wrote, "As the students are French, there will be language problems." Another wrote that "French people are arrogant and competitive, I know they are stereotypes but I've experienced them personally." On the other side of the ocean, a student wrote, "I think they'll be relaxed, as Australians have the reputation for 'no worries, mate' mindsets."

Another assumption was that any differences in cultural values would be minimal, but where they existed, they would be very stereotypical. Most of our students never explicitly discuss culture or country of origin with their negotiation counterparts; rather, they make assumptions about who the other person is based on their current location. One wrote that "They'll be open-minded like us. As it is an international negotiation with people from different cultures and countries, they'll want to get a win-win." Another guessed that "The negotiators will be well-educated and it will stay polite as we are all from places that support collaborative outcomes." The students also assumed that word choice would not be a critical issue, failing to anticipate difference in interpretation. Their rationale seemed to be that because the negotiations would all take place in English, how could language create a problem? "There shouldn't be any problems," wrote one student. "We all speak English and that's all that matters."

When asked to discuss the lessons they learned by participating in the negotiations, the students widely agree on the following points:

- *Negotiating across time and national boundaries can induce strong emotions, including anger, frustration, and disappointment*. Many students reflect on the fact that even though their partner is not physically present and that they had anticipated cultural differences, they often experienced the same wide range of emotions present in face-to-face negotiations. These emotions may be even stronger than usual because vital cues for sense making are missing, often resulting in heightened anxiety. By becoming aware through this exercise of their need to monitor and manage these emotions, students learn a critical lesson.

- *Communication barriers stem from many sources, not just words*. Students were frequently frustrated by the many potential communication barriers. One of the key take-aways from the debriefing is the need to be clear and accurate in communicating interests, not simply positions (Fisher, Ury, and Patton 1991), which, of course, requires some level of trust.

- *Trust is fragile and especially so when you have never met someone*. In this case, simple acts build or erode trust. Many students comment that waiting for fifteen minutes for someone to log on to instant messenger felt like an eternity. They become more aware of the importance of building trust by being reliable, predictable, punctual, polite, and by keeping their promises.

Using the Exercise at Another Institution

Based on our experience, we highly recommend the use of electronic negotiations as a basis for encouraging self-reflection in students. The steps to getting started are relatively straightforward. First, we recommend that interested instructors identify a colleague teaching a similar course at another university with some overlap in the schedule. We would not advocate mixing degree types (e.g., undergraduates negotiating with MBA students at another school) or primary language of instruction.

Second, we suggest that instructors choose a simulation that offers an opportunity for students to go beyond a simple, scorable, and predominantly distributive framework. We have used Les Florets with success for three years but are confident that many other simulations could be used effectively. Instructors are advised to work out the timing of the exercise in advance of the teaching term so that students will know about the exercise from the start and look forward to it as a “real test” of their negotiating abilities developed during the course.

We recommend that instructors collect and confirm contact information before pairing the students. Providing detailed instructions to students is critical (see instructions described earlier in the article). Reducing ambiguity surrounding the simulation logistics increases the likelihood that students will be able to focus on the task of negotiating.

Finally, instructors should anticipate surprises and be available to help students overcome logistical or technological challenges, especially at the start of the exercise.

Extending This Exercise

As we have indicated, this exercise has evolved over time. We believe the model is sufficiently simple to allow a number of adaptations or innovations. Following are a number of ideas we have considered to emphasize distinct aspects of the exercise.

The first idea builds on research examining personal disclosure in electronic negotiation. E-mail negotiators often lack trust or have misperceptions about the other party (Landry 2000). In researching ways to overcome this challenge, Don Moore et al. (1999) found that people who engaged in mutual self-disclosure with their counterparts were more likely to come to agreement. Their manipulation for self-disclosure was very simple: a picture, small biography, and short get-acquainted exchange.

This idea could be implemented in several ways that would lend themselves to comparison. One way would be to provide slightly different instructions to half of the students in each class: one set would include encouragement to share a picture, biography, and get-acquainted exchange; the other would not. The pairings for the negotiation should match students with the "personal disclosure" instruction set. Comparing the impasse rate between students who engaged in personal disclosure with those who did not would be one way of measuring its impact. A twist would be to look for patterns of reciprocity by pairing students with personal disclosure instructions with students without personal disclosure instructions at the other school.

A second idea for future iterations of the exercise would be to encourage students to explicitly share information about their emotional states during the course of the negotiation. Three experiments using computer-mediated negotiation by Gerben van Kleef, Carsten De Dreu, and Antony Manstead (2004) suggest that negotiators are especially influenced by their opponent's emotions when they are made available for consideration. The transcript of the exchange would allow students to analyze the impact of such statements on their counterparts.

A third idea builds on the cross-cultural possibilities for this exercise. Gregory Kersten, Sabine Koszegi, and Rudolf Vetschera (2002) found that cultural differences affect the expectations of negotiators prior to actual bargaining. By administering questionnaires that assess students' expectations in advance of the exercise and later comparing them to the outcomes obtained both inter- and intraclass, a high level of cross-cultural discussion and understanding could result. To date, we have only shared overall impressions of each class with the other class (we do this through an initial debrief with our students followed by an immediate e-mail to the other faculty member). As one of the courses is a one-week intensive course, and this is a capstone exercise, there is not enough time for a fully monitored and debriefed interclass (student-to-student) reflection session. We do believe that a full interclass, student-to-student debrief is important, and would provide a rich set of reflections for the students and ourselves. In the overview debriefs we have shared, the students' reactions tend to be centered around frustration with "the other students" and "their views," with most of our students challenging points made by the students in the other class. These reactions mirror what research on electronic negotiation continues to tell us (e.g., Fortune and Brodt 2000; Thompson and Nadler 2002) — that in- and out-group mentalities prevail when negotiations take place over electronic media.

Looking into the Mirror to Encourage Learning

The use of an electronic negotiation simulation as a tool for encouraging meaningful student reflection provides a number of benefits. First, the negotiation process is asynchronous: it is typically characterized by multiple, time-delayed negotiation sessions or episodes. This process not only permits students to reflect on their recent experiences and update their mental models before responding (a clear benefit for most), but also engages students in the real-time challenges and frequent frustrations of asynchronous communication environments. Second, e-mail is increasingly used as a primary medium for negotiations, yet the medium itself often influences negotiations in ways that many people do not recognize. Hence, gaining experience negotiating in this context is valuable. Third, the geographic distance component introduces additional complexity that better represents organizational realities than many in-class, student-on-student negotiation exercises do. In this exercise, students negotiate with counterparts they have never met who often come from halfway around the world. This effectively eliminates the element of "safety" associated with negotiating with a classmate.

Finally, the e-mail or instant messaging process produces a transcript that can be analyzed postnegotiation. When students reflect upon their transcripts, they often observe the critical junctures or inflection points in the process. When they do, they gain insight into the importance of strategic improvisation, dealing with the unexpected, responding in the moment, and adapting effectively to sudden changes (Balachandra et al. 2005). While students are not able to go back and "fix" their possible errors, they gain a heightened awareness of the need to formulate and then adapt strategy throughout the negotiation process. They are also sensitized to the power of language and the importance of word choice (Sokolova, Szpakowicz, and Nastase 2004). Additionally, students discover missed opportunities, such as ideas offered by either side that presented possibilities to create value that were not recognized in the moment. Coupling these ideas with the creative solutions obtained by other students will help students gain confidence in their ability to identify opportunities and to suggest value-creating options in the future.

Although this type of exercise requires taking some extra steps beyond the normal classroom simulation, we have found that students regularly rate it as one of their most valuable learning experiences. One student sent one of us an unsolicited e-mail about the exercise, a year after completing the course: "The cross-cultural negotiation exercise made me feel anxious, excited, worried, hopeful, challenged, interested, confident and yet afraid . . . all in one exercise," he wrote. "I planned more for that negotiation than I did for any of the other negotiations in class and the results paid off. I learned a lot about myself, from how wrong I could be about cultural ignorance and stereotypes (my negotiation counterpart wasn't even from the other country) to how competitive I get and how easy it is for me to misinterpret others' communications (not to mention thinking that my own words and thoughts were clear when they were not) . . . it was one of the most challenging things I did during my time at university and one of the things that I learned the most from."

The depth of students' analyses and the breadth of their insights following this exercise often surpass all other negotiation teaching cases we have used. While this is not the only arrow in the thoughtful negotiation professor's quiver, it is one that consistently hits the bull's-eye for encouraging the developmental self-reflection of student negotiators.

NOTES

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1. Throughout the remainder of this article, we use the terms "faculty members" and "students"; however, we firmly believe that the teaching tool we describe is equally applicable to negotiation training programs (where the more appropriate terms would be "trainers" and "participants").

2. In his 2002 article, Jonathan Cohen argues that the first four topics are discussed in most negotiation courses but that negotiation instructors and practitioners often overlook a fifth important topic grounded in ethics, the topic of respect (see the References for full citation).

3. For a thorough review of this research, see Leigh Thompson and Janice Nadler's article (2002). We also highly recommend the work of Gregory Kersten. An excellent place to access research from Kersten and his colleagues is the InterNeg Research Centre (http://interneg.concordia.ca/).

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