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# *Research Reports*

## The Curse of the Smartphone: Electronic Multitasking in Negotiations

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*In this study, we have explored the use of mobile phones during negotiations. Specifically, we examined the effects that multitasking — reading messages on a mobile phone while negotiating face to face — had on the outcome achieved in a negotiation, as well as on perceptions of professionalism, trustworthiness, and satisfaction. Using an experimental design in a face-to-face dyadic negotiation, we found that multitasking negotiators achieved lower payoffs and were perceived as less professional and less trustworthy by their partners.*

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**Key words:** negotiation, multitasking, technology, mobile device, smartphone, professionalism, trust.

### **Introduction**

Who hasn't been in a meeting, or giving a lecture, or even having a simple conversation only to notice others turning their attention to a mobile

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device instead of focusing on the information at hand and the person conveying it? The buzz of a new message feels like the call of a siren to many, and although they may initially intend only to check new messages, in many cases they then drift into an interactive process of firing off quick answers to the new issues raised. Before long, they are no longer paying much attention to the speaker they were supposed to be attending to. Many of us have been guilty of such divided attention. These situations are examples of a particular form of contemporary multitasking.

The last decade has seen an unprecedented increase in the use of mobile devices. As devices get smaller, smarter, and more portable, they have found their way into the day-to-day lives of millions of people. As of mid-2011, about 35 percent of American adults had smartphones and 87 percent of smartphone owners had access to the Internet through their handheld devices (Pew Internet Data 2011), and the numbers continue to rise. Similarly, today's workplace culture often demands that employees attend to multiple tasks at once or become involved in multiple projects simultaneously. Within one workday, one hour, or even one conversation, this may involve switching between tasks, such as reading or sending e-mail, making phone calls, attending meetings, and completing paperwork (Czerwinski, Horvitz, and Wilhite 2004), potentially leading people to feel in a constant "time famine" (Perlow 1999). Thus, although not exclusively at fault, as mobile phones become capable of integrating telephony, texting, and Internet connectivity, these devices are also causing interruptions in the daily activities of individuals (e.g., unwanted or ill-timed calls, e-mails, and/or texts). Given the vast, and growing, use of smartphones in the workplace, we believe that research to explore the relationships between smartphone use and work outcomes, relationships, and well-being is both necessary and timely.

With this study, we seek to make such a contribution by exploring the potential role that mobile devices can have in negotiations. Research has explored some of the impacts of electronic media on negotiations, including what happens when parties conduct all or some of the negotiation via electronic media, such as e-mail. We extend this stream of research by examining what happens to the negotiation process when one of the negotiators is *distracted* by his or her mobile device. That is, in the midst of a face-to-face negotiation, one party begins to multitask between negotiating and checking messages on a mobile device. Would this behavior influence the relationship between the two parties, the negotiated outcome, or both? This addresses a gap in the literature about how technology use affects negotiation processes by looking at the technology not as an *enabling feature* of the negotiation, but as a *distractor*, which has not yet been empirically explored.

While multitasking generally refers to any time someone performs at least two tasks at the same time (Benbunan-Fich and Truman 2009), we use

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the word here to specifically focus on multitasking that involves the use of an electronic communication tool (e.g., smartphones) while the person is simultaneously engaged in another activity. As described above, an example of this would be a person checking a smartphone for messages (unrelated to the business at hand) during a meeting or negotiation. Another well-reported example of such multitasking is when people either text or talk on a mobile phone while driving. This practice is dangerous because the act of engaging in a separate conversation “disrupts performance by diverting attention to an engaging cognitive context other than the one immediately associated with driving” (Strayer and Johnston 2001). But according to a poll conducted by telecommunications company AT&T, about 49 percent of American adults admitted to texting while driving, even while acknowledging the danger (AT&T 2013).

Importantly, driving while texting or talking on the phone has an impact not only on the driver but potentially also on others who rely on the safety of that driver’s behavior. Similarly, in a professional setting, such as a meeting or negotiation, one might understand that it is inappropriate to be checking messages during a conversation, but that knowledge does not necessarily inhibit the behavior.

This widely accepted notion about the relationship between mobile devices and driving may have a direct corollary in the negotiation realm. In particular, the interdependent nature of the consequences of multitasking may be parallel, as not only (1) the productivity of a person who multitasks may suffer, but (2) *other* people who are dependent on the attention of such a person may also be adversely affected. Previous psychological research has focused primarily on the consequences of multitasking on an individual performing a task by him/herself. With this study, we examine the effects of multitasking in the dynamic setting of a negotiation in which *every move* by either party has implications for the final outcome, be it a subjective or an objective outcome. We have explored the effects of multitasking behavior first on the multitasker personally and then also on the observer/partner in the negotiation.

## **Multitasking and Performance**

Classic research on human information processing has established that people’s cognitive resources are limited with respect to attention (Kahneman 1973). Thus, engaging in more than one task at a time burdens our finite cognitive capabilities. Productivity can suffer as the limited cognitive resources must be divided between tasks (Norman and Bobrow 1975), more so for complex tasks than for simple ones (Speier, Valacich, and Vessey 1999). Even short interruptions can negatively affect performance (Kreinfeldt and McCarthy 1981; Gillie and Broadbent 1989).

The literature on multitasking makes a distinction between dual-tasking (doing two things at the same time, such as driving and talking) and

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task-switching (such as asking someone to wait while you answer a phone call). Cognitive science has shown, however, that conscious attention, even in the dual-tasking case, cannot actually be paid to two separate tasks at the same time; instead, multitasking is a process of constantly and rapidly switching one's attention from one task to the other. In the task-switching case, one task is entirely forgotten as the other is attended to, and in the dual-tasking case, both tasks are still "running," but one is at the forefront of consciousness and the other takes a background position and slows down tremendously, which can explain why reaction times are slow when the driver drives and talks on the phone simultaneously (Pashler 2000).

Performance is inhibited because the need to transition between tasks taxes the individual's ability to focus effectively. Thus, some information cues may be missed, and important information can get overlooked. Interruptions, such as when task-switching, use the same sensory channels for both the primary and secondary tasks, thereby also affecting working memory (Norman and Bobrow 1975).

Multitasking, in general, also generates "attention residue," which occurs when thoughts about the first task persist even when attention has supposedly been switched to the second task (Leroy 2009). When a person performing Task A is interrupted by Task B, for example, attention on A will persist especially if he or she has not yet completed Task A (and even if it has been completed; see Martin and Tesser 1996), so he or she may have trouble fully disengaging from Task A despite the demands of Task B. Attention residue takes up cognitive resources and leaves the person with less ability to process Task B, resulting in weaker performance on *both* tasks (Leroy 2009). This can be an even greater problem for chronic multitaskers than for those who multitask less frequently; they are less able to filter out irrelevant stimuli from their environment and less able to ignore irrelevant information (Ophir, Nass, and Wagner 2009).

Because negotiations are complex tasks that require continuous processing of information, we argue that multitasking by reading messages or texting on a mobile phone during a negotiation will similarly diminish the negotiator's performance. Thus, our first hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis One:* Negotiators who simultaneously check messages on their mobile device while negotiating face to face (i.e., multitasking) will have a worse final outcome than negotiators who do not.

## **Multitasking, Professionalism, and Trust**

People often engage in multitasking behaviors in the presence of others, for example, by checking messages on their mobile device while in a meeting. In any given instance, it might be unclear whether the multitasking behavior (replying to a text message during a meeting, for example) is truly *necessary*

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for that person's job and thus is reasonable behavior, or is optional and perhaps less appropriate: underscoring the questionable nature of multitasking with electronic devices, one study observed that laptops in meetings were used for distracting purposes (as opposed to compliant ones) in more than 75 percent of the cases (Benbunan-Fich and Truman 2009).

Additionally, in a large meeting, one person's distraction may be less disruptive to other participants, but multitasking in a dyadic negotiation virtually guarantees a disruption in the flow of events. A large meeting may continue with one person "tuned out," but in a one-on-one, interdependent conversation like a negotiation, one person's distraction can cause the entire process to halt. How such behavior is perceived can depend on a number of factors, including the counterpart's own tendency toward multitasking behavior. It has been suggested that when working in an interdependent way with another party (or parties) in a time-limited situation, multitaskers are likely to be perceived more negatively by their counterparts, but if the counterpart also has his or her own tendency to multitask, it could reduce these negative impressions (Bell, Compeau, and Olivera 2005).

According to Webster's dictionary, professionalism is defined as "exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in the workplace" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2014). Accordingly, we would expect that those judged as most professional would refrain from behaviors that are considered inappropriate to that role. Thus, seeing another person ignore the immediate conversation by checking messages instead could, it follows, lead others to judge her or him as less professional.

A number of theories of perception support this claim. First, the "actor-observer bias" (Jones and Nisbett 1972) predicts that while one's own multitasking behavior would typically be more readily excused as necessary and appropriate, another's would be more harshly judged. And according to "causal attribution theory" (Weiner 1986), behaviors considered *controllable*, such as the decision to focus upon a mobile phone message while engaged in a negotiation, would be judged more negatively. More specifically, people would tend to judge the offender (i.e., the mobile phone user) negatively *as a person* and not excuse the lapse according to the context. Instead of accepting a rationale for the behavior (e.g., "I'm sure that message was of critical importance and thus I am still dealing with a reasonable person"), he or she would tend instead to blame the actor (e.g., "What a rude person this is, to interrupt our negotiation like that"), especially in a setting such as a negotiation where undivided attention is the norm. Similarly, "social presence theory" (Short, Williams, and Christie 1976) suggests how important nonverbal cues are when communicating parties share the same physical space. At best, a distracted partner's nonverbal cues suggest inattention to the negotiation at hand, and at worst, a lack of respect for others.

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Judgments of professionalism are based on decisions about the appropriateness of the behavior of others in a given context. All three theories suggest that individuals may interpret message-checking behavior in *others* as inappropriate in this setting, and thus judge the individual person as less professional (even if they often behave similarly themselves). Because multitasking is likely to be salient in a one-on-one, face-to-face negotiation, we predict that such behavior will lead to the formation of unfavorable impressions about the professionalism of the multitasker. Thus, our second hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis Two(a):* Negotiators who simultaneously check messages on their mobile device while negotiating face to face (i.e., multitasking) will be perceived as less professional than those who do not.

Trust essentially refers to the willingness of a person to be vulnerable to other's behaviors (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995), and is based, in part, on his or her belief that the other person is competent and reliable. An underlying determinant of a person's trustworthiness is whether or not he or she acts in a manner detrimental to the interests of the party whose trust he or she seeks (the "trustor"). Trust development can be affected by attribution biases (Ferrin and Dirks 2003). When undesirable behaviors are attributed to the person, they typically diminish his or her trustworthiness, especially in situations in which the individuals are new to each other or have trouble getting a "read" on each other. (For example, trust has been shown to be less likely to develop in online negotiations; see Naquin and Paulson 2003; Ebner 2012.)

Research has shown that trust is based on different types of observations at different stages of a relationship, and the judgments of people in new relationships tend to rely on more "surface" features (Levin, Whitener, and Cross 2006) — engaging in multitasking behavior during a negotiation could potentially qualify as such a surface feature. As Edward Tomlinson and Roger Mayer (2009: 93) wrote, "[w]ithout a history of demonstrated benevolence from the trustee, positive or negative interactions are likely to take on greater significance for the trustor. A given act that appears to indicate either high or low benevolence tends to stand alone as input, rather than being taken in the context of everything that has happened between the parties." Similarly, deviation from etiquette norms has been shown to affect the trustworthiness of a person negatively (Vignovic and Thompson 2010). Thus, we predict that this negative perception is also likely to extend to perceptions of trustworthiness. Therefore, the second part of our second hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis Two(b):* Negotiators who are simultaneously checking messages on their mobile device while negotiating face to

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face (i.e., multitasking) will be perceived as less trustworthy than those who are not.

## Multitasking and Satisfaction

The success of a negotiation can depend not only on the objective outcome but also on the parties' levels of satisfaction with the deal. Negotiation research has established that factors other than the objective terms of the outcome can influence negotiator satisfaction, even to the extent that negotiator satisfaction can be fully disconnected from the economic value of settlements (Thompson, Peterson, and Brodt 1996; Gillespie, Brett, and Weingart 2000; Galinsky, Mussweiler, and Medvec 2002; Naquin 2003). For instance, negotiators who received false feedback indicating that their counterpart was happy with the results of their negotiation felt less successful and less satisfied than those who were told that their counterpart was disappointed, even though there was no difference in the economic outcomes across these conditions (Thompson, Valley, and Kramer 1995).

A more recent study found that negotiators' perceptions of a negotiation's "subjective value" are likely to be both consistent and important over time. (Subjective value is defined as a measure that includes negotiators' assessment of the fairness of both the negotiation process and outcome, their feelings about their own conduct during the negotiation, and their feelings about the relationship between and among the parties.) In the context of a recruitment negotiation, researchers reported that candidates who reported higher subjective value also reported higher satisfaction with their jobs, and said that they were less likely to leave the job than did others who emerged with less favorable impressions on this cluster of variables. In fact, subjective value was more predictive of later satisfaction with both the job and the compensation level than was the objective economic value of the offer (Curhan, Elfenbein, and Kilduff 2009).

We hypothesize that disrupting the negotiation by multitasking on a mobile device could diminish the other party's satisfaction with the negotiation. "Procedural justice" refers to participants' sense that the process used to obtain a particular outcome needs to be fair. Thus, even if the objective outcome is acceptable, if the process feels wrong (e.g., unprofessional, lacking trust), participants may feel dissatisfied (Thibault and Walker 1975). Thus, we predict that negotiators will report lower levels of satisfaction when negotiating with a person who is multitasking with a mobile device during the actual negotiation, and our third hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis Three:* Negotiators whose partners simultaneously check messages on their mobile device while negotiating face to face (i.e., multitasking) will be less satisfied with the overall negotiation than those whose counterparts do not do so.

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## Methods

### *Participants and Research Design*

One hundred seventy-two part-time graduate-level business students participated in this study as part of an assignment for a class in organizational behavior. The experimental design had two conditions:

- The *mobile device condition* in which the focal negotiator worked with another party who checked electronic messages on a mobile device during the negotiation. Forty-two pairs of negotiators (eighty-four individuals) participated in this condition.
- The *control condition* in which participants negotiated without distractions from their mobile device during the negotiation. Forty-four pairs of negotiators (eighty-eight individuals) participated in this condition.

Participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions, and we counterbalanced which side of the negotiation received the electronic messages. To simplify, we will refer to these participants going forward as “message receivers” (those who actually got the messages on their cell phones), “onlookers” (partners of the message receivers who had to wait while the message receiver attended to the messages), and “controls” (those who negotiated face to face without mobile phone distractions).

### *Procedures and Materials*

The simulation used for this negotiation was “Oceania” (Thompson and Bloniarz 1998). We randomly assigned participants in this two-party negotiation to represent either a theater venue or a production company with a touring show. All participants received their case materials in hard copy during class time at least one week before the exercise. In all conditions, participants were explicitly instructed that their goal was to maximize their individual payoff and that they had one hour in which to complete the negotiation.

Earlier in the semester (on the first day of class), students were required to report whether they had e-mail capability on their cell phones (91 percent did), and if so the e-mail address for their mobile device. They were also instructed that they were never allowed to have laptops or cell phones on during class exercises unless explicitly instructed to do so.

The negotiation task was an integrative negotiation involving multiple issues, meaning there was the possibility of trading issues of lesser value for issues of greater value to improve the outcomes reached by both sides. In the confidential instructions to participants in the “message receiver” condition, participants were informed that they were to bring their mobile device to the negotiation because they would likely receive e-mails regarding the case during the negotiation. They were also told to keep this information confidential and not to reveal to the opposing side that they

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were receiving messages related to the negotiation. In actuality, participants in this condition were sent three messages on their mobile phones, and although the messages were nominally about the case they provided no new or useful information so as to change the negotiation in any way, other than through the interruption itself. The case is fully quantitative, allowing us to score both individual and joint outcomes (both parties' outcomes added together).

After completing the negotiation and turning in the contract, participants completed a postnegotiation questionnaire in class via pen and paper. We then fully debriefed the class results and the study.

### ***Dependent Measures***

*Satisfaction.* To measure satisfaction with the negotiation, we used a modified version of the five-item measure developed by Arthur Brayfield and Harold Rothe (1951). The original instrument has eighteen measures, but it is typically used in the shortened five-item format (e.g., Judge, Bono, and Locke 2000; Bono and Judge 2002). We modified the five items to be more appropriate for a negotiation context, and this can be seen in Appendix One.

*Professionalism.* We also asked participants two questions targeting the perceived professionalism of their counterpart in the negotiation (keep in mind the participants are MBA-level students conducting a business transaction). The first question addressed their willingness to have future dealings with the other party. Specifically, we asked participants to rate the statements, "I am willing to negotiate with my partner again" (this willingness has been shown to decrease during online negotiations; see Naquin and Paulson 2003) and "My partner seemed very professional throughout," on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

*Trustworthiness.* To assess their negotiating partners' interpersonal trustworthiness, we used the Organizational Trust Inventory—Short Form (OTI-SF) developed and validated by L. L. Cummings and Philip Bromiley (Cummings and Bromiley 1996). This scale uses twelve items geared toward assessing three dimensions of trustworthiness: reliability, honesty, and good faith in the other party with respect to fulfilling his or her commitments. We slightly modified the OTI-SF to be more appropriate for a negotiation setting by asking negotiation-based questions (e.g., substituting the words "the other party" where the original questionnaire stated the name of the "other department" or "unit"). The modified OTI-SF is presented in Appendix One.

*Objective Payoff.* Each side's objective payoff in the negotiation was recorded, both in terms of their individual levels of gain and their joint value.

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## Results

For all onlookers, we first compared all dependent variables across role assignment with results indicating no difference between roles for any of the dependent variables. In other words, some onlookers played the role of the theater venue and some played the role of the touring company, but none of our measured outcomes varied according to the role. Consequently, we collapsed the data across simulation role for all subsequent analysis. None of the dyads reached an impasse in either of the experimental conditions — all parties were able to reach agreement. Note that for all variables below, we first explored *dyad-level* differences by comparing the means for the control groups with the means for the mobile device condition. Then, we explored *individual-level* differences by comparing each individual according to which instructions he or she received: “onlookers” versus “receivers.” Tables One, Two, and Three report the means and standard deviations for all variables at both levels.

### *Satisfaction*

When we analyzed satisfaction at the dyad level, we found that the participants in the control condition were more satisfied than were those in the mobile device condition. This effect seems to be driven by the lack of satisfaction felt specifically by “onlookers” in the mobile device condition. The individual-level analysis further supports this finding: negotiators in the mobile device condition reported different levels of satisfaction than did controls. Specifically, onlookers reported less satisfaction than did message receivers, and this difference was statistically significant.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, negotiators in the control condition showed statistically equivalent ratings to the message receivers. Thus, only the onlookers were less satisfied, which supports Hypothesis Three. (The reliability for the satisfaction measure was acceptable with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.71.)

### *Professionalism*

Perceptions about the level of professionalism exhibited by the negotiating counterpart also varied by condition. Our dyad-level analysis reveals that participants in the mobile device condition reported significantly lower levels of professionalism in general than did those in the control condition. Again, the individual-level analysis is illuminating: no differences were reported between negotiators within each pair in the control condition, but in the mobile device condition negotiators did report significant differences between each person within their pair. In particular, onlookers rated the professional behavior of their partners (the message receivers) as lower than average, while message receivers rated their partners (the onlookers) as well above average in terms of professionalism. No statistical difference was found between the ratings that onlookers received and those in the control condition. These results support Hypothesis Two(a). (The reliability for this professionalism index was acceptable with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.70.)

**Table One**  
**Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Manipulation <sup>1</sup>			-			
2. Satisfaction <sup>2</sup>	5.53	0.66	-0.25*	-		
3. Professionalism	5.20	1.13	-0.35**	0.52**	-	
4. Interpersonal trust <sup>3</sup>	5.57	0.90	-0.13	0.67**	0.559**	-
5. Objective outcome	\$553,930.23	\$120,664.59	-0.02	0.028	-0.084	-0.059

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ . <sup>1</sup>The manipulation was coded as either "0" (no mobile device) or "1" (mobile device). <sup>2</sup>Satisfaction was measured by the five-item measure developed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951). <sup>3</sup>Interpersonal trust was measured by twelve-item questionnaire developed by Cummings and Brommley (1996).

**Table Two**  
**Mean and Standard Deviations by Experimental Condition**

	Mobile Device		No Mobile Device	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Satisfaction	5.37	0.75	5.72	0.52
2. Professionalism	4.81	1.13	5.61	0.98
3. Interpersonal trust	5.46	1.05	5.69	0.69
4. Objective outcome	\$551,409.09	\$121,121.08	\$556,571.43	\$121,594.97

**Table Three**  
**Ratings Received by Onlookers versus Message Receivers**

	Ratings Received by Onlookers		Ratings Received by Message Receivers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Satisfaction*	5.11	0.97	5.63	0.72
2. Professionalism**	5.68	1.28	3.94	1.19
3. Interpersonal trust*	5.61	1.1	5.31	1.05

\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.001$ .

### ***Trustworthiness***

At the dyad level, we found no overall difference between the control and the mobile device conditions. Differences did surface, however, in interpersonal trust between negotiators within each pair in the mobile device condition, but not within the controls. In the mobile device condition, onlookers once again rated the message receivers as significantly less trustworthy than the message receivers rated them. And again here, the ratings that the message receivers gave their partners were statistically identical to the ratings that the controls gave each other, which supports Hypothesis Two(b). (The reliability for this measure was acceptable with Cronbach's alpha of 0.90.)

### ***Objective Outcome***

We analyzed objective outcome at both the individual and the joint levels. We found no differences between the experimental conditions for joint gain (with both conditions earning roughly \$554,000 on average). When

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exploring the difference in payoff between individual negotiators within each pair in both conditions, however, we found a significant difference between negotiators as a function of experimental condition. We here calculated the difference between negotiators in a pair as a percentage of the total joint payoff. The difference in profits in the between-individual level payoffs within a negotiating pair in the mobile phone condition was roughly 50 percent greater than in the control condition. This means that in the mobile phone condition, one person earned significantly more than the other, on average, while in the control condition the two values were much closer to equal.

The obvious next question is which of the two sides in the mobile phone condition did better. Not surprisingly, onlookers did significantly better (earning, on average, \$316,000) than did message receivers (who earned a mere \$236,000 by contrast). Thus, although the total value earned by both parties (the joint gains) was statistically the same between experimental conditions, we found a significantly greater differential between individual payoffs in the mobile phone condition, with message receivers earning less than those who were not distracted by their mobile phones (onlookers).

## Discussion

Overall, these findings demonstrate a consistent set of negative results for those using a mobile phone to check messages during a face-to-face negotiation. These individuals not only fared worse in terms of their negotiated settlement, but were also considered less trustworthy and less professional by their counterparts. Finally, even though the onlookers — the negotiators who were not distracted by their own phones — were able to reap more objective gain on average, their satisfaction with the whole negotiation suffered, potentially leading to other negative consequences down the road.

Consistent with several previous studies (Norman and Bobrow 1975; Spier, Valacich, and Vessey 1999), multitasking was found to reduce one's performance; thus, multitasking individuals settled for lower payoffs than their nonmultitasking counterparts. This study extends the finding into the context of a face-to-face negotiation wherein continued responsiveness and adaptation to the opponent's arguments and counteroffers are required. Thus, a lapse in attention or an additional burden on cognitive resources helps prevent a negotiator from attaining the maximum possible outcome.

It is also possible that the time taken by the individual to use a gadget is fruitfully used by his or her opponent to counterargue or rework the negotiation strategy, although this was not measured in the study. Thus, the time lost by one opponent in multitasking may be time gained by another for leveraging his or her stance in the negotiation. While the opponent may use the time gap to her or his advantage, it may also be possible that the

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multitasking person, when interrupted unexpectedly, becomes apologetic, and in an effort to balance the situation or to save face, allows his or her opponent to gain certain advantages in the negotiation.

Our findings support the general view that when a person allows a distraction to find a way into a negotiation, he or she is perceived as less professional, which clearly has significant implications for how people should use electronic devices during a negotiation. We hypothesize that because the focal negotiator did not check a device and was therefore focused on his or her counterpart, he or she expected mutuality in behavior. As social exchange scholars have argued, expectations often form the basis for behavior.

George Homans (1961) found that social relations are often governed by exchanges, mostly unwritten and implicit. For example, when someone helps a coworker, that person expects something in return, maybe gratitude or help in another situation. When these expectations are not met, the person may become angry or change his or her behavior toward the other party. This may explain why a multitasking person is seen as less professional, because the multitasker is failing to meet the behavior expectations of his or her counterpart. Another possible explanation is that any behavior that is considered rude may also be perceived as interactionally unfair (Bies and Moag 1986), and such perceived unfairness likewise provokes an “unfair” reaction, for example, trying to get the upper hand in the negotiation by using more competitive tactics. It is also possible that those distracted by their phones in a negotiation may send a signal of lesser competence because it is clearly disadvantageous to be paying less than full attention during a negotiation. This as well may trigger a sense of opportunity for the onlooker.

Researchers have produced a considerable amount of literature on the importance of trust and the process of trust-building in negotiation contexts (for reviews, see Butler 1999; Ferrin, Kong, and Dirks 2011). Trust is an important and desirable outcome of negotiations and can even determine whether parties are willing to engage in future interactions (Naquin and Paulson 2003). Parties considered less trustworthy are already at a disadvantage in a negotiation because their motives are generally suspect from the very beginning (see Ferrin, Kong, and Dirks, 2011, for a review).

In this study, we found that when the negotiating partners are relatively unknown to one another, trust takes a beating when one person multitasks in a negotiation. This indicates that, in the absence of prior information about the negotiator, even small cues can hamper trust. Possibly, a negotiator’s multitasking leads the counterpart to doubt his or her motives and sincerity when trust might have formerly existed.

Another possibility is that the nature of the negotiation situation is such that distrust is the more common initial stance (i.e., negotiators begin by distrusting each other), and this context lays a fertile ground for trust to

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be impaired even for small infractions. Added to this, the continuous interruptions themselves may generate distrust because they could offer opportunities to engage in competitive behavior (i.e., what if the person is using the phone to gather information that will give him or her an advantage?). Trust is fragile and is more easily destroyed than built (Meyerson, Weick, and Kramer 1996), and it seems that multitasking may present one such threat to trust in a face-to-face negotiation.

## Limitations and Future Research

The laboratory nature of this experiment is the largest limitation on its generalizability. Students engaging in a classroom exercise may not act and react in the same ways that they might when dealing with colleagues in a workplace setting — whether they be coworkers with whom one has constant interaction or relative strangers. For example, all eighty-six dyads reached agreement as opposed to impasse in our study — an outcome that would be hard to replicate in the real world. It may also be true that people in longer-term relationships allow each other more leeway for managing the competing demands on their attention, or it may be that in that case people are *less* willing to wait while the other person's attention is elsewhere. Studying these effects in a more natural professional setting could yield different results than we observed in the classroom.

Finally, because ratings of trust, satisfaction, and professionalism were taken after the conclusion of the negotiation, it is always possible that the negotiated outcomes influenced the subjective rating process — although this concern may be alleviated by the fact that in our study the highest outcome earners were the least satisfied overall, which suggests strongly that satisfaction was *not* dependent on outcome. We similarly did not ask participants how happy they were with their individual bottom lines.

Future research can also explore the interaction between a range of real-time emotions and reactions to multitasking behavior. For example, if the two parties are extremely angry with one another and emotions are running high, then in such a charged environment a distraction could possibly actually diffuse the situation and calm down the parties — or the interruption might intensify the anger of someone who was merely annoyed. Additionally, it is possible that some people may decide to answer a phone call in the middle of a meeting or negotiation to specifically retaliate against someone who has angered them, as a display of power.

Finally, future research may look at the relationship between power and multitasking more generally. What is the impact of multitasking in a negotiation in which one party has significantly greater power than the other? Perhaps a relatively more powerful negotiator may get away with violating etiquette norms, while if a lower power person does so it may work against him or her.

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If these questions are explored, their answers will enhance the growing literature on the use of technology in negotiations. This study takes a first step in understanding the multi-person effects of multitasking with a mobile device in a negotiation setting.

## NOTE

1. For this and all statistical analyses described in this article, please follow up with the authors for details on the tests and results. See Tables Two and Three for means and descriptive statistics on all study variables.

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## Appendix One: Satisfaction Measurement Instrument

### *Satisfaction Measures*

I am satisfied with the experience I had in this negotiation.

This negotiation seemed like it would never end (*reverse scored*).

I found this negotiation to be enjoyable.

I considered the negotiation to be unpleasant (*reverse scored*).

I was enthusiastic about the negotiation.

### *Professionalism Measure*

I am willing to negotiate with my partner again.

My partner seemed very professional throughout.

### *Trustworthiness Measures*

I think my partner told the truth in the negotiation.

I feel that my partner strongly tried to get the upper hand (*reverse scored*).

I feel that my partner would keep his or her word.

I think that my partner took advantage of me (*reverse scored*).

I think my partner did not mislead me.

I feel that my partner might try to get out of commitments (*reverse scored*).

I feel that my partner negotiated fairly.

I feel that my partner might take advantage of vulnerability (*reverse scored*).

I think that my partner is the type who meets obligations.

I feel that my partner negotiated with me honestly.

I think that my partner succeeds by stepping on other people (*reverse scored*).

I consider my partner to be reliable.