

International Commercial Negotiations: A Focus on Japan

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International Commercial Negotiations : A Focus on Japan

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Trade between Japan and the United States will continue to be crucial to world peace and prosperity well beyond the turn of the millennium. While creative and friendly governmental relations will help provide a positive background for commercial cooperation across the Pacific, the thousands of business people who conduct the day-to-day business transactions between companies in the two countries are the fundamental ingredients of the bilateral relationship. These thousands of managers, executives, and entrepreneurs in both Japan and America are the focus of this study.

The evidence that Japanese and American negotiation styles and behaviors differ is legion. With my own colleagues I have tried to identify the main areas of difference using interviews, field observations, and laboratory simulations, the last including questionnaires and videotaping (Graham 1993). Most of the work done on international negotiation styles, including my own, has been comparative in nature, involving *intracultural* negotiation settings. A few people have begun to address the issue of *intercultural* negotiations in a systematic way (e. g., Francis 1991, and Adler and Graham 1989), but really we know very little about how people behave when bargaining with foreigners.

Some of my most recent work has involved testing a model of the determinants of negotiation outcomes in fourteen countries, including Japan and the United States (Graham, Mintu, and Rodgers 1994 and Graham and Mintu-Wimsatt 1996). The model "works" reasonably well, but often differently across the several countries. In all fourteen cases data collected in intracultural negotiations were used for the empirical tests. In the current study we have had forty-two Japanese and forty-two American business people participate in an intercultural negotiation simulation. Data were collected from "both sides of the table" and are used to test the theoretical model developed earlier. We can then compare the new intercultural results directly with those intracultural results reported previously toward building a better understanding of what happens

when differing negotiation styles mix.

The remainder of the paper is divided into five parts. First, based on the literature a few predictions are made regarding differences between intercultural and intracultural settings. Next, the theoretical model is briefly described and hypotheses stated. The methods of the study are described in the third section. Results are reported in the fourth. The paper is concluded with a discussion and interpretation of the findings.

THE LITERATURE ON INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

In their seminal article regarding international negotiation behaviors, Sawyer and Guetzkow were among the first to posit that negotiators' behaviors and outcomes can be influenced by situational constraints, i. e., intercultural negotiations versus intracultural negotiations: "The face-to-face conduct of negotiations may be influenced by behavioral discrepancies when persons of different cultural backgrounds are brought together." (1965, p. 502)

Support for their supposition has come from a broad array of disciplines. The intercultural communication and psychology literature suggests that people behave differently with members of their own culture than with members of foreign cultures. Research in nonbusiness contexts has demonstrated that when individuals interact with people from different cultures, the differences between them become salient (Bouchner and Ohsako 1977). Moreover, when people in interpersonal situations confront these actual differences, they tend to exaggerate them (Sherif and Hovland 1961 ; Vassiliou et al. 1972).

Mishler (1965) reports that in international exchanges: "The greater the cultural differences, the more likely barriers to communication and misunderstandings become. Some researchers have even questioned whether "managers from significantly different cultures such as Japan and the United States can ever completely understand each other " (Peterson and Shimada 1978). Studies in the following five research areas are particularly relevant.

Interpersonal Orientation

Most of the literature summarized in later sections suggests that negotiators will adjust their behavior from one situation to another. However, Rubin and Brown(1975) imply that people with a low interpersonal orientation (IO) will behave consistently across intra and intercultural situations. They suggest that a high (IO) person is "responsive to the interpersonal aspects of his relationship with others. He is both interested in, and reactive to, variation in the other's behavior." Alternatively, a low IO is "characterized, first and foremost, by a

nonresponsiveness to the interpersonal aspects of his relationship with the other. . .” (Rubin and Brown 1975, pp. 158–159).

Thus, one might conclude that some people will behave in the same way no matter who is on the other side of the negotiation table—someone from the same culture or someone from a different culture. Graham and Herberger (1983) carry this idea one step further when they suggest that American negotiators naturally tend to be low IOs :

I am what I am. Few Americans take pride in changing their minds, even in difficult circumstances. Certainly John Wayne’s character and behavior were constant and predictable. He treated everyone and every situation with his action-oriented, forthright style. He could never be accused of being a chameleon.

So an explanation for ethnocentricity and obstinacy at the international negotiation table is offered. However, most of the rest of the pertinent literature argues that behavior changes will occur across the two settings, and for a variety of reasons.

Negotiator Similarity

The present study provides an excellent opportunity to test Evans’ (1963) “similarity hypothesis.” Evans’ ideas—“the more similar the parties in a dyad are, the more likely a favorable outcome, a sale”—have stimulated a series of studies investigating relationships between similarity and a variety of negotiation outcomes. Weitz (1979), in his excellent critical review of this stream of research, concludes that support for Evans’ similarity hypotheses is weak, and in some cases, flawed by confounds. However, the previous work provides an important background for the issues to be considered here.

McGuire (1968) cites a “considerable body of evidence” and posits the mechanism underlying the influence of similarity :

Presumably the receiver, to the extent that he perceives the source to be like himself in diverse characteristics, assumes that they also share common needs and goals. The receiver might therefore conclude that what the source is urging is good for “our kind of people,” and thus change his attitude accordingly. (p. 187)

Evans (1963), Davis and Silk (1972), and Bagozzi (1978) all discuss at some length the relationship among similarity, attraction, and outcomes. Implied in

Evans' work is a causal relation among the three constructs. With attraction intervening: similarity→attraction→outcomes. Thus, negotiators in same culture dyads might be expected to be more attracted to partners and achieve higher negotiation outcomes—profits and satisfaction.

Communication Problems

Closely related to the issue of negotiator similarity are intercultural communication problems. Everyone writing in the area of international negotiations reports substantial communication problems at the negotiation table which often lead to undesirable outcomes for one or both parties (cf Sawyer and Guetzkow 1965; or Rubin and Brown 1975). Condon's (1974) views are most insightful—he classifies intercultural communication problems into four categories:

1. Language and language behavior;
2. Nonverbal behavior;
3. Values;
4. Patterns of thought.

Condon adds that these categories might be considered in order of ascending perplexity. That is, misunderstandings at the level of language are often obvious and most easily corrected. Misunderstandings at the lower levels are seldom obvious to the participants in an interaction.

Empirical support for Condon's views is broad. Of particular interest is an article by Graham and Andrews (1987) which describes in depth how communication problems, at all four levels, result in undesirable outcomes for Americans negotiating with Japanese business people. It follows then that negotiation outcomes will be less favorable in intercultural negotiations because communication problems are much more likely to occur.

Reciprocity and Interactional Synchrony

A series of studies by social psychologists and sociolinguists suggests that negotiators in a dyad tend to imitate one another's behaviors and balance individual negotiation outcomes. Gouldner (1960) explains that a "reciprocity norm" establishes a stable set of mutual rewards that guides interactions such as negotiations. Putnam and Jones (1982) report that reciprocity is more evident in integrative message patterns than in distributive strategies. Walton and McKersie (1965), Rubin and Brown (1975), and Pruitt (1981) all describe a tendency of negotiators to match one another's bargaining strategies.

Even deeper than Gouldner's reciprocity norm are the unconscious influences of concepts of interactional synchrony and emotional contagion. Condon (1968) and others have reported that a speaker's body movements are coordinated with one another and coordinated with the articulation of speech. Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson (1994) describe in great detail the evidence that humans naturally mimic those with whom they interact.

Therefore, based on these concepts of reciprocity, synchrony, and emotional contagion negotiators in intercultural interactions might be expected to adapt their usual intracultural behaviors to more closely reflect those of their foreign counterparts. Likewise, outcomes of intercultural negotiations may reflect a compromise between results typical of the differing intracultural styles.

Acculturation Theory

Acculturation theory suggests what might happen at the point of culture contact. That is, what will result from the mix of negotiation and communication styles?

Acculturation theory is a "mature" paradigm in anthropology. It received the most attention during the 1930s and 1940s. This attention was primarily a response to problems with Indian peoples in the Americas and problems of British colonial rule. The questions were: To what extent can indigenous peoples be assimilated into "advanced" cultures, and how might this process of assimilation be facilitated? The most widely accepted definition of acculturation is that of Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936). "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."

The difference between the acculturation paradigm and more recent social-psychological models is the units of analysis. Acculturation theory has really been applied in a macro sense, the units of analysis being entire cultures. The units of analysis in social psychology have been the individual or, at most, small groups.

Acculturation theory fits the specific situation of intercultural negotiations very well. Acculturation theory is particularly useful if process measures are selected as the dependent variable. That is, what factors will determine which parties will adopt which negotiation and communication styles, given that these styles are culture specific?

Certainly, the most obvious example is language. What language will be spoken during intercultural negotiations? Will one party adopt the language of the other party? The circumstance of Japanese and American intercultural

negotiations is interesting. Most often, English is the language spoken during the negotiations between Japanese and Americans. Part of the explanation is that the Japanese possess greater linguistic abilities than Americans. Japanese schools teach and emphasize English. However, in the long term, the most important explanation is the power-differential, both economic and military. The Japanese emphasis on learning English can be attributed in large part to the American occupation following World War II. Additionally, until recent times, Japan has been economically dependent on the United States. However, there are exceptions. For example, it is common practice for high-level Japanese executives to use interpreters, even though they may speak and understand English. Here the use of interpreters is expressive of the person's power. Further, with the increasing economic interdependence of recent year, changes are taking place. Japanese businessmen now complain about Americans' ignorance of Japanese business customs.

All the theories suggest generally that behavior will be different in cross-cultural negotiations. Adler and Graham (1989) have provided information on how Japanese and Americans adjust their behavior during cross-cultural negotiations. The current study is an extension of that work wherein a model of negotiation processes is tested using cross-cultural interactions as the context.

THE NEGOTIATION MODEL

The theoretical model depicted in Figure 1 is identical to that tested in Graham, Mintu and Rodgers (1994) and Graham and Mintu-Wimsatt (1996). Because their conceptual development is complete, we will only summarize it here.

Two dependent constructs are used in the study: (1) Individual profits attained by bargainers in a negotiation simulation: and (2) satisfaction of their partners measured using a post-exercise questionnaire.

The first independent variable considered is a problem-solving approach (PSA). A PSA involves first an emphasis on questions and getting information from clients about their needs and preferences. Second, once the other's requirements and circumstances are fully understood, the negotiator then accommodates the product or service offering to the client's needs. The focus is on cooperation and an integrative approach, wherein the needs of both parties are discussed and eventually satisfied. Despite a variety of labels used for the PSA concept (e.g. cooperative orientation by Rubin and Brown 1973, or representation bargaining strategies by Angelmar and Stern 1978), most researchers have reported a positive relationship between PSA and negotiation

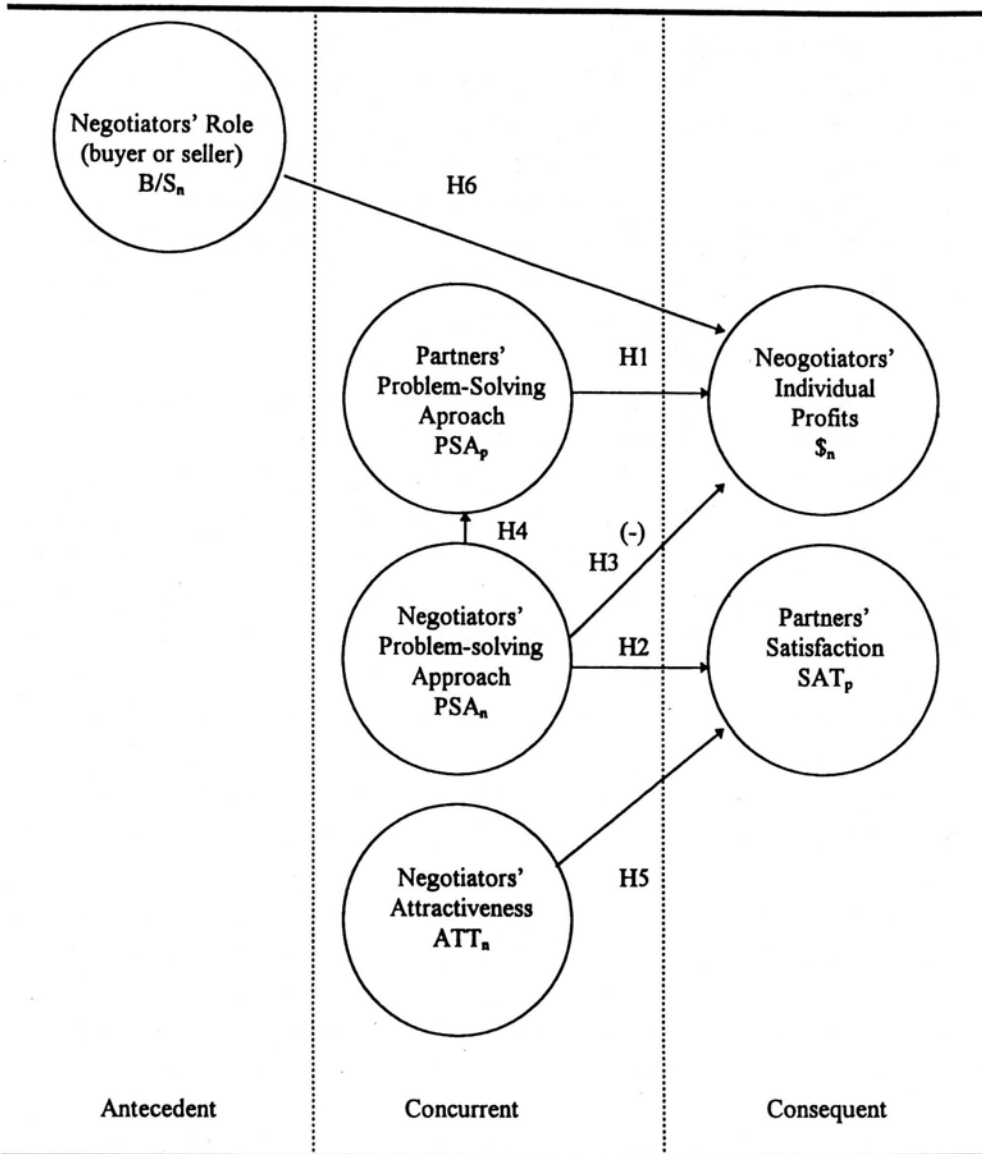


Figure 1 Model of Negotiations

outcomes.

H1. *Negotiators' individual profits are positively affected when partners use strategies that are more oriented toward problem-solving.*

H2. *Partner's expressed satisfaction with agreements is positively affected when negotiators use strategies that are more oriented toward problem-solving.*

In the former case, bargainers who encourage targets to provide information about themselves and their needs and preferences can be expected to achieve higher negotiation outcomes.

Walton and Mckersie (1965) suggest the opposite of PSA strategies is distributive or individualistic bargaining strategies, the goal of which is to change a target's attitudes, attributions, or actions. Promises and threats are examples of distributive or instrumental appeals (cf Angelmar and Stern 1978). Rubin and Brown (1975) suggest that distributive strategies induce concession-making by the other party. Consequently, bargainers using distributive or instrumental strategies can be expected to achieve higher individual negotiation outcomes, or,

H3. *Negotiators' individual profits are negatively affected when negotiators use strategies that are more oriented toward problem-solving.*

Another relationship to be investigated in this study is the influence of negotiator's approach (i. e., behaviors and attitudes) on partner's negotiation approach. Rubin and Brown (1975) suggest the importance of adjusting one's bargaining tactics based upon impressions of opponents. Pruitt (1983) and Walton and Mckersie (1965) are among several other researchers who describe a tendency of negotiators to imitate or match one another's bargaining strategies. Although empirical support for these latter propositions is limited at best, the following hypothesis is suggested :

H4. *Negotiators use of strategies that are oriented toward problem-solving positively influences partners to use strategies that are oriented toward problem-solving.*

The reader will appreciate the importance of the structural relations presented in Figure 1 and the necessity of the partial least squares analysis. For example, as conceived, the relationships represented in Hypotheses 3 and 4 should suppress the relationship represented by Hypotheses 1 (cf Bagozzi 1980). That is, the correlation coefficients may actually be understating the true relationship. A simultaneous equation approach will help to sort out which relations are the most meaningful within the complex model proposed.

Another important concurrent construct is attractiveness of the negotiator (here we do not consider physical attractiveness, but rather ask questions about interest and comfort levels between negotiators). Graham (1986) has shown target attractiveness to influence source's satisfaction positively in a negotiation simulation. Rubin and Brown (1975), in their review of the negotiation literature, conclude that, generally, interpersonal attraction enhances bargaining outcomes. Therefore, to the extent that a person receives social rewards from a relationship with an attractive other, that person will be more satisfied with the

relationship (or the negotiation agreement).

H5. *Partners' satisfaction is positively affected by negotiators' attractiveness.*

The final relationship represented in Figure 1 is between role of the negotiator (i. e., buyer or seller) and individual profits. Status and role (cf. Rubin and Brown 1975) have been found to influence negotiations. In associated studies, Graham et al. (1994) have found that in some countries buyers tend to achieve higher profits than sellers.

H6. *Buyers achieve higher individual profits than do sellers.*

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Forty-two American and forty-two Japanese business people participated in this study. All had been members of executive education programs or graduate business courses and had an average of greater than 8 years business experience. On average, the participants were over 30 years of age, and at least 45% of their work involved contact with people outside their respective firms. Table 1 reports the demographic characteristics and the corresponding means and standard deviations of the variables of interest.

Negotiation Simulation

The negotiation simulation, developed by Kelley (1966) and used by Clopton (1984) involves bargaining for the prices of three commodities. Each bargainer receives an instruction sheet, including a price list with associated profit for each

Table 1 Group Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics, means (s. d.)

	Japanese Negotiators		American Neotiators	
	Intracultural (n=44)	Intracultural (n=42)	Intracultural (n=42)	Intracultural (n=160)
Age	36.8 (5.1)	30.4 (4.0)	33.2 (9.0)	32.8 (9.50)
Years of Work Experience	13.1 (5.5)	8.4 (8.3)	9.8 (8.6)	9.6 (8.1)
Percentage of Work Involving Contact with People Outside Firm	51.8 (19.9)	57.9 (25.7)	46.3 (32.3)	51.7 (30.3)
Individual Profits (\$)	47.9 (7.7)	43.2 (11.6)	48.5 (9.7)	44.9 (11.1)
Satisfaction (SAT), $\alpha_J = .82, \alpha_A = .86$	3.8* (0.9)	14.4 (3.1)	16.3 (2.9)	14.6 (3.2)
Problem-Solving approach (PSA) $\alpha = .63, \alpha_A = .83$	10.3 (2.2)	10.4 (1.8)	9.8 (3.0)	9.6 (2.6)
Negotiator Attractiveness (ATT) $\alpha_j = .77, \alpha_A = .73$	12.0 (2.0)	12.6 (2.0)	12.4 (2.5)	11.9 (2.3)

* single item measure of SAT for Japanese intracultural

price level. Participants are allowed 15 minutes to read the instructions and plan their bargaining strategies. Though simple enough to be learned quickly, the simulation usually provides enough complexity for one-half hour of interaction. Within the one-hour time limit, bargainers use face-to-face, free communication. No explicit rewards (e. g., grades, money) were associated with performance or participation in the simulation. Several other negotiation and bargaining simulations were considered, but Kelley's game was selected primarily because it best simulates the essential elements of actual commercial negotiations observed in preliminary field research, including multiple issues (i. e., integrative and distributive) and the potential for a variety of negotiation strategies including log-oiling and cooperation (Pruitt 1983).

Data Collection Instruments

After the bargaining session, each individual completed a questionnaire. To ensure equivalence, the Japanese translation of the simulation instructions and questionnaire were back-translated into English by different translators, and then the original and back-translated versions were compared and discrepancies resolved.

We considered two negotiation outcome variables. Negotiators' individual profits ($\$_n$) were derived directly from the agreed-upon bargaining solutions. Partners' satisfaction (SATp) with the negotiation was measured using a single item included on the postsimulation questionnaire.

Process-related measures also were derived from post-exercise questionnaires. Participants rated their own PSA bargaining strategies. Finally, partners rated the interpersonal attractiveness (ATTn) of their respective negotiators.

Data Analysis

The measurement problem was attacked first by calculating Cronbach or reliability coefficients (α is a measure of the intercorrelation of the separate items in each scale, that is, a measure of the internal consistency of multiple item measures) as suggested in Davis, Douglas, and Silk (1981). See Table 1. The three-item PSA scale performed rather poorly regarding absolute α scores and the comparative criterion outlined by Davis, Douglas, and Silk (1981) (i. e., scores should be greater than 65 and overlap with 90% confidence intervals of the original scale, in this case English).

Loading pattern coefficients (estimates of the coincidence of the separate items in a single measure) and parameter estimates were calculated for each cultural group using partial least squares (PLS). Then the statistical significance of the parameter estimates was determined using a maximum likelihood

estimation technique (Joreskog and Sorbom 1981), with the PLS latent variable correlation matrix as input, to calculate the t-value for each parameter estimate. The significance levels present some evidence that relationships do exist, in fact, as opposed to the hypotheses that they are the results of a spurious arrangement (Fornell and Robinson 1983).

Using PLS as the analysis approach is appropriate for three reasons. First, using PLS, parameters can be estimated independent of sample size. Given that sample size varies for our four groups from 160 to 42, PLS seems more appropriate for parameter comparisons across groups than LISREL (a less flexible structural equations program) by itself. Second, PLS avoids parameter estimation biases inherent in regression analysis (Fornell, Rhee, and Yi 1991) and some of the restrictive assumptions underlying LISREL (Fornell and Bookstein 1982). Third, and perhaps most important, PLS provides the most flexibility regarding measurement of the constructs. That is, in both correlation and regression analyses, additive scales must be used as measures of the PSA and ATT constructs. LISREL can be used with either additive scales or with a reflective indicator measurement approach wherein each item is modeled as one of a set of multiple indicators of an unobservable construct. Using LISREL, the internal consistency of the measures (i. e., degree of correlation between the separate items) can be determined simultaneously with parameter estimation.

PLS allows not only for additive scales and reflective indicators but also for a formative indicator measurement approach. In a formative indicator model, individual items are viewed as representing multiple causes of the constructs. This is an important distinction as Fornell and Bookstein (1982, p. 441) describe :

...unobserved constructs can be viewed either as underlying factors or as indices produced by the observable variables. That is, the observed indicators can be treated as reflective or formative. Reflective indicators are typical of classical test theory and factor analysis models ; they are invoked in an attempt to account for observed variances or covariances. Formative indicators, in contrast, are not designed to account for observed variables ; they are used to minimize residuals in the structural relationship.

RESULTS

In Table 2 are reported the findings of the study. Columns II and III include the results from the analyses of the intercultural data collected for the current study and columns I and IV include results reported in previous papers (i. e., Graham, Mintu and Rodgers 1994 ; and Graham and Mintu-Wimsatt 1996).

Table 2 Results, PLS Parameter Estimates (using formative indicators)

	Japanese Negotiators		American Negotiators	
	I. Intracultural ^a (n=44)	II. Intracultural (n=42)	III. Intercultural (n=42)	IV. Intracultural (n=160)
H1, PSA _p → \$ _n	-.09	.18	.06	.28**
H2, PSA _n → SAT _p	-.07	.24	.16	.14*
H3, PSA _n ⁽⁻⁾ → \$ _n	-.15	.31**	.04	-.01
H4, PSA _n → PSA _p	.36**	.52**	.26*	.29**
H5, ATT _n → SAT _p	.39**	.52**	.67**	.39**
H6, B/S _n → \$ _n	.43**	.16	.08	.19**
R ² -\$ _n	.27	.24	.01	.10
R ² -SAT _p	.16	.32	.50	.18

^a measures of SAT using a single item

* p<0.10 ** p<0.05

Hypothesis 1 was supported only for the American intracultural negotiations (column IV). Negotiation partner's problems solving oriented strategies appear to have had no effect on negotiator's profits in the other three circumstances.

Hypothesis 2 was weakly supported for the American intracultural negotiations (column IV). In the other circumstances a negotiator taking a problem-solving approach appeared to have had little effect on partner's satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 was not supported for any of the circumstances. Indeed, contrary to the stated hypothesis, when Japanese negotiators used more problem-solving oriented strategies they achieved higher individual profits.

Both hypotheses 4 and 5 were supported across all circumstances. Negotiation partners tended to reciprocate negotiator's problem-solving strategies. Negotiator's interpersonal attractiveness was found to strongly influence partner's satisfaction levels.

Hypothesis 6 was supported only for the intracultural negotiations. Role of the negotiator (i.e., buyer or seller) appears to have made no difference in negotiator's profits in intercultural negotiations.

The hypothesized model explained substantial portions of the variation in negotiation outcomes for the Japanese bargainers in the intercultural negotiations—individual profits=24% and partner satisfaction=32%. The model explained little with regard to American's profits in the intercultural negotiations, but half of the variation in partner's satisfaction, i.e., 50%.

Post Hoc Analyses

Given the surprisingly poor performance of the model in explaining American's performance in the intercultural negotiations, other potential causal factors were considered. In particular, the post-negotiation questionnaire

included a measure of extroversion/introversion (Eysenk's six-item scale, 1958) which proved to be salient in previous analyses (e. g., Graham 1985). American's who were more introverted based upon the Eysenk scale achieved significantly higher individual profits when negotiating with Japanese ($r = -.36, p < 0.05$). Extroversion/introversion was unrelated to individual profits in the other three circumstances.

DISCUSSION

Reciprocity and imitation seem to be operating in all circumstances. Although communication theory suggests that intercultural misunderstandings will cause all kinds of problems in negotiations, bargainers in both cultures appear to be able to size up (either consciously or unconsciously) the strategies of their negotiation partners and adjust their own behavior accordingly. The concepts of interactional synchrony and emotional contagion seem to be supported in our study.

The effects of interpersonal attractiveness appears to be a cultural universal, at least across the intracultural negotiation settings in the fourteen cultures reported in Graham et al. (1994) and Graham and Mintu-Wimsatt (1996), and the two intercultural settings examined here. Indeed, interpersonal attraction seems to be an even more important determinant of overall satisfaction in Japanese/American intercultural negotiations than in the respective intracultural negotiations. It is also of interest to note that Japanese negotiators who were more extroverted (Eysenk's scale 1958) were more interpersonally attractive to their American counterparts in the intercultural negotiations ($r = .35, p < 0.05$).

For the Japanese negotiating with Americans things appears to be different in two major respects (compare columns I and II in Table 2). First, when Japanese work together, role is the most important issue—buyers achieve higher profits than sellers. This key relationship disappears in the intercultural negotiations. Indeed, in the intercultural negotiations, PSA strategies take on a new importance for the Japanese. The Japanese taking a problem-solving approach achieved higher individual profits, while there is no such relationship between the constructs in the intracultural data. Sharing information seems to be a key factor in their negotiations with Americans.

Things are also different for the Americans when they bargain with Japanese (compare columns III and IV). The importance of role is also dampened in the intercultural interactions, but it was never such an important factor in negotiations between Americans anyway. More importantly the influence of the Japanese partner's PSA strategies has no effect on the American's individual

profits. Reciprocity still seems to be at work, but the informativeness of the Japanese partner appears to be of little direct economic benefit. Rather, the Americans who keep their mouths shut, the introverted ones, seem to achieve higher profits when working with Japanese.

Conclusions

Clearly in this study we are just scratching the surface of a wonderfully rich and interesting kind of human behavior—face-to-face international negotiations. Cultural differences seem to be key. A variety of other methods will be useful in the continuing study of the topic—game theory, experiments, field interviews and observations, and videotaping of simulated negotiations. Contributions can be made using a variety of perspectives—business, sociology, psychology, anthropology, communications theory, and socio-linguistics. Former U. S. Ambassador to Japan, James Hodgson, has described culture as the “thicket” which must be traversed on the way to fruitful Japanese/American cooperation. His metaphor implies the hard work necessary for all of us to gain mutual international understanding.

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