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A Real-World Negotiation Task for Real-time (Synchronous) Learning

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A Real-world Negotiation Task for Real-time (Synchronous) Learning

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a negotiation task designed to introduce negotiation concepts to business students experientially in a manner that also has real consequences for the students. Students negotiate for a variety of actual items that they can take home or use in other ways. Furthermore, the task, which previously was carried out only when teaching students who were attending class in person, was recently reformulated to include both in-person and remotely-attending students. Both in-person and remote students participate in the process and debriefing, and report that they enjoy the exercise and feel engaged. This activity helps answer the need to provide complex and messy experiences during synchronous instruction that can help achieve the same gains typically provided by experiential learning within the physical classroom.

INTRODUCTION

The negotiation process is complex (Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2007) and messy (Fells, 2012) and the best-laid plans for negotiation can go awry quickly. These aspects of negotiation can be difficult to communicate particularly given traditional methods of teaching. More often than not, negotiation is taught as a very systematic, planned process. Although general principles of negotiation can be taught in this manner, actual experience with negotiation followed by feedback is needed to become an effective negotiator (Core et al., 2006). As a result, there have been calls for teaching students negotiation skills in a context that more closely resembles life situations (e.g., Ulijn, Dúill, & Robertson, 2004). This is because the choices made by both sides of the negotiation continuously affect the negotiation process (e.g., Fells, 2012).

One option for teaching negotiation is drawing on experiential methods. Concrete experiences are thought to form the basis for observations and reflections, which are then distilled into abstract ideas that can be actively tested (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Thus, experiential learning can both engage students and result in the greater understanding and retention of concepts (e.g., Kolb, 1984; Smart & Csapo, 2007). Business games, role plays, and simulations have been developed for business courses because they provide many of the benefits of concrete experiences (e.g., Faria, 2001). For example, they can provide the complexity and ambiguity inherent in management situations (Gunz, 1995; Rollag & Parise, 2005) as well as consequences for responses (Schumann, Anderson, & Scott, 1997). As a result, students retain what they learn substantially better than they do as a result of other methods (Johne, 2003). Accordingly, there are a number of role-plays and simulations of negotiations that have been described in the pedagogical literature (e.g., Barkacs & Barkacs, 2016; Weiss, 2003).

However, there are downsides to most simulations and business games in that they sometimes lack sufficient realism. Related to this, students can get more caught up in the entertainment or technological aspects than in the learning process (e.g., Gros-Salvat 2009). Another issue is that many of these games are both quite structured and limited in scope and therefore do not sufficiently capture how most situations in organizations are fairly messy and unstructured (e.g., Bigelow, 2004). Finally, a perceived lack of realism such as the absence of actual outcomes can be a hindrance to taking the game and learning seriously (e.g., Sieworek et al., 2013; Eseryel et al., 2020). For example, negotiation simulations as well as role-playing do not generally provide students with a situation in which they could truly win or lose something. Additionally, students must extensively rely on their role-playing abilities and imagination. A better way to teach negotiation may be to create a situation in which more consequential outcomes occur, ones which students can more easily become invested in obtaining. This paper describes an activity that is designed to do this. The "real-world" in the title refers to the fact that students are negotiating for items they can take with them.

An additional obstacle to teaching negotiation is technology-based: how to convert what are normally in-person negotiation exercises to be usable for remote teaching and vice versa—how to convert online negotiation activities for in-person teaching. Traditionally, games and simulations have been for one mode or the other—either fully online or fully in person. Many of us have been challenged, due either to unforeseen circumstances or to pressures for increased enrollment and student convenience, to provide both in-person and online instruction simultaneously. This has been variously called blended synchronous learning or "here or there" (HOT) instruction, in which on-campus and remote students participate in in learning activities together in real-time (McKimmy & Schmidt, 2015). Although synchronous learning has been a trend for some time, recent events have fast-forwarded the need to convert experiential activities from only classroom or online-based to synchronous-ready. The activity in this paper began as an in-person instructional activity and was recently reformulated to engage students who were attending both in person and online.

THE NEGOTIATION ACTIVITY

Learning Objectives

The activity is used to demonstrate planning for a negotiation, integrative and distributive negotiation methods, and other negotiation-related concepts such as identifying most desirable outcomes, least desirable outcomes, and best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA). It can also be used to illustrate conflict causes (e.g., scarce resources, interdependent) and conflict response types (e.g., forcing, accommodating, collaborating). Following are suggested learning objectives for this exercise.

1. Demonstrate the ability to plan for a negotiation, including establishing desired outcomes and anticipating the desires of the other team.
2. Demonstrate the ability to manage the negotiation process, including opening with interests rather than positions, responding to others' requests/demands with creative alternatives, managing the caucusing process, and managing time pressures.
3. Demonstrate the ability to critically examine the relative effectiveness of integrative and distributive negotiation strategies in terms of various outcomes.

Participants and Materials

Typically, participants have been MBA students; however, this exercise could be used with other types of groups that are learning about negotiation. This activity has been conducted in person with about 20-30+ students and also in a combined in-person and remote class with 36 students (in which about 1/3 of the students were remote). Both versions are described here. In both versions, the entire class is involved in the negotiation. The class has to be big enough to be able to divide it in two groups—probably no fewer than 10 students. It also has to be small enough to allow for group discussion; 50 to 60 students is probably the maximum. For larger classes, the instructor could conduct more than one negotiation—for example by splitting a class into four groups to conduct two negotiations. However, this may be quite chaotic and difficult to manage if done simultaneously and may therefore need to be scheduled for two separate sessions.

List of Rules. Students should be supplied with a hard copy of the list of rules of the negotiation or these can be provided on the LMS (Appendix A). The list could be provided just before the session begins or prior to the class period in which it occurs.

The rationale for the various rules does not have to be explained to students, but is provided here for the instructor's awareness. First, the negotiation structure as described in the rules (e.g., the limited ability to caucus) is based on certain types of negotiations in the real world in which this is done. This negotiation format was originally modeled off a negotiation exercise used in an HR class that involved role playing as representatives of management and the union. Second, rules are structured to motivate students to negotiate both desirable and undesirable outcomes (e.g., the rule that all items have to be negotiated for), which is typical in the real world as well. Negotiators often have to accept terms they are not too happy about in order to get what they really want. Third, some of the rules are designed to solve problems that have occurred in past negotiation sessions—e.g., the rule about not being able to simply toss a coin—or to avoid possible problems—e.g., the rule that items offered must be in good taste and the rule that groups must negotiate how won items will be distributed within the group.

Items. This exercise requires upfront planning in terms of the collection of items to be negotiated for. Prior to the class, the instructor should collect both desirable and undesirable items (e.g., over the summer or over the course of the year). Desirable items might include popular food items for college students (e.g., moon pies) or items with vintage university logos that are scarce and popular (e.g., the "Piano Husky" at Michigan Tech). Undesirable items are often unpopular old or obsolete items (e.g., old textbooks, a calculator). Three major sources of items are suggested—logo items and other "swag" (t-shirts, mugs, pens, keychains, I-phone holders, etc.) obtained from the institution's marketing staff and from companies that recruit at the university, discarded items from colleagues' offices (old textbooks, DVDs, conference bags), and food items which are popular (e.g., energy bars). The instructor can also collect and buy other unique or quirky items, such as seasonal products students could use to decorate their dorms or apartments (e.g., pumpkins, plants) and unwanted gifts/items previously received or collected (e.g., a jar of coins, puzzles, used board games, holiday socks, framed pictures of deer, a plant). Note: used items work fine for this activity, but the instructor should mark on the list provided to students that they are used. (See Appendices B & C for examples of item lists.)

Finally, in order to have a very desirable item in the collection, the instructor could add one or two "certificates" that allow the holder of the certificate to obtain an exemption for a portion of their project group's deliverables (if applicable), such as their project presentation (e.g., be given more time to do it or be allowed to get out of doing it altogether). This item is not only desirable but also usually adds complexity to the negotiation since most project groups are spread across the two negotiating teams, which are determined randomly.

Students are also allowed to add their own items to the mix during the negotiation session but there are clear rules for this (see rules 9 and 10 in Appendix A).

The number of items needed depends on the class size. Generally speaking for a 30-person class, between 12 and 20 items are sufficient, with some of the items containing multiple pieces that could be broken up and distributed to allow for more creative negotiation (e.g., bags or boxes of candy). Also, when presenting the items, the instructor can group them for convenience of listing or taking photos (e.g., a real plant and bobblehead plant; a set of different sized pumpkins). Students then can either use those groupings or work creatively in breaking up the clustered items to move the negotiation process forward. On the other hand, because of the time limits in the negotiation, students often will cluster un-clustered items on their own (e.g., give us all the food items).

In order to be able to do the synchronous negotiation (i.e., with both the students in the classroom and those remotely on Zoom), the instructor will need to take pictures of the items and upload them along with a list of the items to the LMS. In addition to being provided with a list of the items (e.g. Appendix B, Appendix C), Lists of items should be provided to students just before class or in class—e.g., the list could be posted to the LMS a few minutes before going to class. This ensures that all the negotiation takes place in class and students have not had the time to make deals outside of class.

Time Requirements

An ideal class period for this negotiation is 75 minutes or more. That is because 20 minutes are used for the planning period, 30 minutes for the negotiation, and 15-20 minutes for the debriefing. There is additional time needed as well to go over the rules and distribute the items (about 5-10 minutes each). Professors who teach in shorter class sessions may need to break the activity up and do it over two or more class periods—e.g., going over the negotiation rules beforehand and/or holding the debriefing off until the succeeding class period.

Procedure

Classroom-only version. For the classroom-only version, in which all students are attending in person, items can be taken to the classroom via a basket, bag, or wagon (depending on the number and weight of the items). Alternatively, a student could be asked to help carry the items. The items are arranged on a table in front of the class or out in the hallway by the classroom. (Students are allowed to visit the table during the planning session to see the items up close.)

Students are provided a copy of the rules and the professor goes over the rules before the planning session begins.

The class then is split into half (e.g. either by asking students to count off by ones and twos or creating one group from the left side of the classroom and the other group from the right side of the classroom). Each of the two resulting groups then goes into a 20-minute timed planning session. The instructor may wish to use an internet timer and display it on the screen for this period. Groups are allowed to leave the classroom for this and go to a nearby location, such as another classroom or the hallway, so the other group cannot hear their planning. Groups are asked to designate someone to do the opening remarks in the negotiation but all students can join in the negotiation discussion at any other point in the negotiation process. When the timer rings, groups that are planning in a room or hallway too far to hear the timer will need to be called back to the classroom.

For the negotiation, the two groups are given 30 minutes to negotiate, with each group allowed to call two 3-4- minute caucuses. When one group calls a caucus, the other group is allowed to caucus as well; this does not use up one of their two caucuses they can call. Before setting the timer, instructors should give groups an opportunity to rearrange the room. This arrangement of the room provides the instructor with another element to discuss during the debriefing since some room arrangements are more conducive to collaborative negotiation (e.g., a circle in which members of the two groups are scattered) than others (e.g., two lines of tables with the groups facing each other). An internet timer is used to set the 30-minute time limit and this is displayed on the classroom screen so student can see the time counting down. If a caucus is called during the negotiation session, groups can go back to where they were when they planned the session. Another internet timer will have to be set for the 3- or 4-minute caucus session. This timer can then be projected on the screen during the caucus. The 30-minute timer does not get reset during this time since caucuses take time away from the negotiation session. Groups that are outside the classroom for the caucus may need to be called back to the classroom when their time is up since they may not be able to hear when the timer rings. When groups come back to the classroom to continue the negotiation session, the professor can again project the 30-minute timer on the screen. The negotiation session continues until an agreement is reached or the 30 minutes are up.

Students are then given a few minutes to gather and distribute their negotiated items to their groups before the debriefing begins.

Rule 5 of the negotiation specifies that students may be given additional homework if no deal is reached before the time limit (see Appendix A). This is usually a good motivator for them to reach a deal the first time. If an agreement is not reached, however, the instructor takes the items back to his/her office and students may be told they will do the negotiation again at the next class. When this occurs, the instructor should let them know the some or all items may change. This is necessary to discourage students from making deals outside of class. The instructor should also give the students homework before the next class that is related to breaking the impasse in the negotiation. For example, in one class, the two chief negotiators were quite competitive and no deal was reached because each refused the other's "take it or leave it" offer. Therefore, they were asked to have lunch together before the next class. This was to encourage relationship building, which can enhance negotiation.

Synchronous version. The synchronous version begins the same way as the classroom only version but deviates at the point of doing the planning session. In the synchronous version, all students, both in-person and remote, meet online in Zoom for the 20-minute planning session. This requires that all in person students bring their computers and headsets/earbuds to class. At this point if there is a speaker microphone being used in the classroom (e.g., Chat Attach), it should be turned off to avoid feedback between student microphones and the classroom speaker phone. For the Zoom planning session, students are divided into two groups randomly by using the Zoom breakout room feature. Each group is asked to name three students to be their representatives during the negotiation session. To enhance remote communication, students may want to use online tools such as an Excel sheet or Jamboard to track desired and unwanted items, how items will be distributed, and planned negotiation strategies. Often, they will do this on their own even if the instructor has not suggested it.

As with the classroom-only version, in-person students can view the items displayed on the table in the classroom or hall. Remote students will be able to view the items in the photos posted in the LMS; however, sometimes in-person students will take their computers up to the table in order to show the remote students the group of items.

When the timer rings, the breakout rooms in Zoom are left open, but remote students and all student representatives doing the negotiating are asked to rejoin the main Zoom room so they will be able to hear the negotiation. Students can be told this using the broadcast feature in Zoom. In person students can remain in the breakout rooms since they will be able to hear the negotiation in the classroom. However, in-person students probably will have to take off their headsets or turn down their volume during the in-class negotiation. At this point, the instructor turns the classroom speaker phone—e.g., Chat Attach—back on. Non-representatives are asked to turn off their cameras in Zoom, so that everyone can more easily see who the negotiators are. In-person students who are group representatives are asked to come to the front of the class near where the conference microphone (e.g., Chat-Attach) is so that remote students can hear them negotiating. Unlike with the classroom-only negotiation, they are not allowed to rearrange the chairs given the need for remote students to be able to hear them. They are asked to bring their computers and have their videos, but not microphones, on so that the remote students can see them. Any remote representatives are heard through the classroom conference microphone. The Zoom room video is projected on the screen in the classroom so that in-person students can see the faces of the remote negotiators as well as the in-person negotiators. Occasionally, the negotiation countdown timer is shown on the screen instead.

When a group wishes to caucus, all students, both remote and in-person, rejoin their breakout groups in Zoom and a 3-4-minute internet timer is set (e.g., Countdown Timer: https://www.online-stopwatch.com/countdown-timer/). Because of hardware and software differences, some students may need help from the instructor to rejoin their rooms. If students simply put their group number before their name in Zoom, the instructor can easily "slide" them into the correct room. When they hear the timer go off, they either rejoin the main room (negotiators and remote students) or stay in their breakout rooms (in-person students).

As with the classroom-only version, the negotiation session continues until an agreement is reached or the 30 minutes are up. If an agreement is not reached, a similar strategy can be used as with the classroom-only negotiation (assigning homework and redoing the negotiation at the next class period), but the homework cannot be something like asking the group representatives to have lunch since students are not co-located. Asking them to have a Zoom meeting in which they get to know each other before the next class session is an alternative. They should be instructed to not discuss how to distribute the items during this meeting.

As with the in-person activity, following the end of the negotiation session, assuming an agreement was reached, students should be given a few minutes to allocate the items within their groups. The instructor should plan to mail items awarded to the remote students following the activity. The instructor may choose to pay for the mailing as long as the item is not too expensive to mail; however, sometimes students will offer to pay for the mailing of the item. Instructors might want to estimate how many items they will be asked to mail as well as their likely cost and then decide whether they will cover that cost, split it with the remote students, or ask them to cover it. In-person students are responsible for providing to the professor the items the remote students in their group were awarded, along with their mailing information.

DEBRIEFING THE ACTIVITY

To help with the debriefing discussion, the professor should take mental notes during the negotiation in order to be able to relate examples during the debriefing. Prior to the negotiation, instructors may want to assign the set of debriefing questions to students who serve as observers. This might be especially helpful in a large class, particularly if there is more than one negotiation occurring. (The professor and observers should be able to go in and out of the breakout sessions, whether physically or virtually, during the planning phase to be able to do this.)

Following is a set of questions that can be used as the basis for the debriefing, including typical responses to them. For ease of use, they are organized based on the three learning objectives. The debriefing questions can be posted on an unpublished page in the LMS that is displayed (and shared in Zoom for remote students to see) during the debriefing. Students can be put into breakout groups in person or in Zoom to discuss the questions and then the groups can report to the whole class key points they discussed, or, if there is not enough class time to do this, the class can discuss the questions as a whole. A minimum of about 15-20 minutes should be allocated for the debriefing.

Prior to asking the debriefing questions relevant to the specific learning objectives, it is helpful to ask students if they feel like their group was successful in the negotiation. Often both groups feel they were successful because they both were able to get their most desired items. Sometimes, there is dissension within a group and an individual member doesn't think the group was successful. This may be because they didn't get the item they wanted or they didn't agree with the decisions made during the negotiation (e.g., didn't have enough input, didn't like that their side "gave in" etc.). All of these responses can be discussed as being issues that can develop during negotiations, particularly when large groups with diverse interests or values are being represented.

Demonstrate the ability to plan for a negotiation. For this objective, students can be asked to consider the following questions: 1) How well do you feel you prepared for the negotiation (during the planning period) and was this reflected in your outcomes? 2) Did your group identify your desired, unacceptable, and acceptable outcomes, possible tradeoffs and BATNAs during the planning period? What were these? 3) Did your group have a planned bargaining strategy? How well was this strategy carried out? What were the consequences of this strategy, lack of strategy, and/or implementation of the strategy?

Groups often do not think they prepared adequately for the negotiation. Some of this is time-related. A typical problem is focusing too much on identifying what items are desired and not desired and not discussing what negotiation strategies should be used or how items will be awarded within the group. Groups generally identify their desired and undesired outcomes in terms of obtaining or avoiding items—in fact this usually takes up the majority of their planning time. Tradeoffs may or may have not been discussed during planning. If not discussed during planning, groups find they come up during the negotiation session, usually requiring calling a caucus. Generally, groups do not discuss their BATNAs during planning although they probably should. The instructor can point out that having a good sense of what the group feels about walking away from the negotiation if it isn't going well will avoid some conflict within the group that can occur later such as if the chief negotiators choose to walk away and group members think they shouldn't have. The opposite has also occurred—negotiators have continued the negotiation and agreed to offers when their group members have felt like they should have walked away.

Often groups do not have clear strategies other than who will primarily handle the negotiations. If this is the case, the instructor could ask why those people were chosen—e.g., did they have a particular valued skill? Occasionally group members will share information with their group about what the other group would likely want because they overheard a classmate or they really know what a classmate would want because they are friends with them. The helpfulness of having information ahead of time about likely requests and using "business intelligence" or relying on established relationships to determine negotiation strategies can be discussed at that point. Sometimes groups will discuss their strategies for distributing the items within their groups, which is important for the success of the negotiation as well.

Demonstrate the ability to manage the negotiation process. Following are some types of questions that help meet this objective: 1) Did your group build a relationship with the group at the beginning of the negotiation? If so, how? How well did your group manage the relationship throughout the negotiation? 3) Did your group emphasize shared goals when conflicts arose? If so, what were these shared goals? 4) What roles did people within your group take on in the negotiation? Were these roles assigned or did they emerge? What additional roles were needed? 5) Which issues were the most difficult to reach agreement on? Why? What strategies were used for these difficult items? 6) What kinds of behaviors/actions helped in reaching an agreement? What kinds of behaviors/actions hindered reaching an agreement? 6) How would you describe the interaction that took place between the two sides—e.g., Respectful? Disrespectful? Cooperative? Conflict-laden? How would this affect future negotiations if the professor had you do this again with a different set of items? (If conflict management is being taught along with negotiation, questions about the causes and effects of conflict in the situation as well as response styles to conflict, such as forcing, accommodating, and so forth can also be asked.)

It is interesting to see how groups choose to begin the negotiation. Some groups start by making chit-chat about other courses students are taking jointly, for example. This is an example of some attention being given to relationship-building. However, the tendency is for groups not to invest much time in relationship-building. The reasons for this can be discussed, but most likely include the time pressures and also the low-context culture found in the U.S. (if the activity is being carried out in this context). Groups do sometimes emphasize shared goals during the negotiation, the most common one being that they all do not want to have additional homework as a result of not reaching an agreement. Usually leadership roles emerge within each group based on factors such as who has the most ideas, or is the most vocal, or volunteers to represent the group. Groups usually also identify a person who records what the other group has agreed to so far. Other roles are often unclear, but some may emerge as the negotiation progresses. For example, often students will feed either ideas for offers or information about items to the key negotiators for their team during the negotiation session. Some students may take on the role of "policing" such as by speaking up when they feel like the other party is violating a rule, hiding an item, or being dishonest.

The items that are the most difficult to agree on are of course the most desired items. Sometimes this includes the certificate (s) and sometimes it does not. Often the desired items are surprising. For example, chocolate bars were at the top of the list for one group and a plant was at the top of the list for another group. In still another session, some framed photos of deer were highly valued. During the debriefing, the instructor or students might discuss how getting "stuck" on the most desired items can eat up a lot of time in the negotiation. Another topic is what strategies were used in order to try to get the group's most desired items. These may or may not have been planned strategies. For example, comments often made during the session include "any of the items could be bought at a store" and "most items aren't worth more than five dollars." Usually, the behaviors typical of a distributive negotiating style, e.g., lying, hiding things, etc. are discussed as hindrances to the negotiation relationship and progress due to the low level of trust they foster; additionally, the tone taken in the negotiation by some negotiators is often a hindrance, such as using a very competitive approach (which is sometimes seen through nonverbal behavior only) or using "take it or leave it" demands (which are distributive tactics as well).

Students often identify the creative approaches to the negotiation such as offering additional unique items members have or different ways to distribute items as being helpful behaviors. Sometimes they identify the use of humor as being helpful. Some classes feel like they left the negotiation process feeling positive about the other team. Many do not. If they do not feel positive about the other group, usually it has to do with a lack of respect given them in the process (e.g., the use of yelling or negative labeling) and a lack of trust of the other team due to the trickery used in the negotiation. Students may discover that "winning" can mean you did so at the expense of future possible negotiation relationships because of the resulting bad feelings.

Demonstrate the ability to critically examine integrative and distributive negotiation. Questions that help students accomplish this objective include the following: 1) What type of bargaining strategy did your team use—integrative, distributive, or mixed? Why did you use this strategy? 2) What type of bargaining strategy did it appear that the other team was using? 3) Did the type of bargaining strategy used by the teams change over time? If so, what factors influenced this change?

There is usually plenty of material from the negotiation activity to illustrate the idea of distributive versus integrative bargaining. As discussed, hiding information or items is trickery that is characteristic of distributive negotiation. Frequently, students will hide from others what their real desires are and even mislead the other group about them. One time, a member of a group physically took each item the group had negotiated for and put it by the team's members, sometimes hiding the items under desks or behind chairs or bookbags. This behavior created the appearance that the item was no longer one of the items to be negotiated for, even though it could have been renegotiated until the end of the session. Another time a group took the entire table of items, which had been out in the hall, into the elevator and down to another floor of the building. (They were penalized for this action by the professor by removing one of their possible caucuses.) Students will also often lie or hide information from the other team about their most desired items. (Inconsistent statements or statements that don't make logical sense can be very revealing about a group's preferences. For example, one negotiator proclaimed that the candy bars the other team wanted to divide between the two groups couldn't easily be divided when they clearly could.)

Examples of integrative negotiation are less common but will occur as well. In particular, groups often begin the session in an integrative way, then later use a distributive style when the time pressure increases. For example, some groups start with interests, not positions, and divide up items in creative ways. One example of a creative approach is finding a group for the certificate that has two members on each negotiation team, so that both negotiation teams benefit equally. Some groups arrange the chairs so that they are not facing each other but are more circular. Another example of integrative negotiation is offering something of their own—an item or items that are not on the list. A class with a bartender offered drink tokens. Student athletes have offered access to athletic-related events, such as a photo op with the team. Another group offered to buy pizza for the entire class the next week if they could have all the items. Therefore, the opportunities for integrative negotiation are many, but they require out-of-the-box thinking. Integrative offers usually occur at the beginning or in the middle of the session; when the time pressure builds, such as in the last five minutes, groups will often use "take it or leave it" demands, which are more distributive in nature.

Applicability to Additional Topics/Courses

Although this task is designed primarily to teach negotiation topics, there are a number of other topics that can be discussed along with those concepts that are more strictly related to negotiation. Following are suggested additional sets of questions and discussion topics.

Decision Making. Since multiple decisions occur in this activity, it lends itself nicely to analyzing this topic. The

focus can be on both the decision-making occurring during the planning phase of the activity and the decision- making that has to continuously occur during the negotiation, whether it is during the negotiation session itself or during the caucusing. The discussion can be broken down into the steps of the decision process as follows.

Defining the Problem: What information was missing when you made your decisions and how could you have tried to get that information? What information did your group focus on but was ultimately irrelevant or should have received less importance? What information did your group have but not weight enough? As discussed, students could have consulted with the other group during planning but they often do not, leaving them mostly in the dark about likely requests. They could also be asked if they shared information about students on the other team from previous interactions that helped them define the problem.

Generating Alternatives: Discuss how your group generated alternatives for the negotiation. Did you display any biases that typically affect this phase such as linear thinking or stopping too quickly? Were there any creative alternatives you missed? How did the constraints in the situation (both real--e.g., time--and imagined--e.g., assumptions) affect your generation of alternatives? One group, for example made an interesting observation that the way the professor framed the activity—by discussing how some previous classes had gotten really competitive—served to frame the activity more as a win-lose situation rather than one that called for collaboration. Most groups miss several possible creative alternatives, particularly having to do with items they have that could be thrown into the mix or alternatives that help decrease the focus on the distributing items on the list (e.g., everyone sharing some pizza instead).

Selecting Alternatives: Discuss how your group selected the alternatives you generated during planning and then later, how the group selected among the offers the other group made. What criteria were used? How were these selected? How were they weighted? The decision criteria are usually the wants of the group members, but these wants may be weighted differently. For example, obtaining the most vocal member's or the key negotiator's desired items may get more weight. Another decision criterion is usually the perceived fairness of the distribution of items across the two groups. This could lead to a discussion of how fairness is determined—e.g., is it based on the value of items, the quantity of items, and so forth.

Implementation and Evaluation: Discuss how well your group implemented your plan in terms of the negotiation process itself and also the distribution of items--e.g., did everyone get their items and if not, why not? Also evaluate whether everyone in your group was happy with the outcome of the negotiation for your group and why or why not. Particularly in the remote version of the activity, implementation is often poor in that in-person students don't always ensure that the remote students get their items.

However, this often isn't discussed. It is helpful to ask this particular set of questions a week or two after the activity to give students some time to distribute items first.

Change Management. Many change management activities are designed to throw a wrench in an ongoing norm or set of expectations students have, and this activity lends itself nicely to demonstrating that concept. However, some changes to the activity's typical procedure will be needed in order to demonstrate change management issues. First, some or all of the students could be redistributed into two completely new groups either during the planning or caucusing phases or during the negotiation activity itself and then asked to continue with the negotiation (e.g., as if nothing happened). Second, the items to be negotiated for could be suddenly changed. Third, the negotiation rules could be changed. Once again, students would be asked to continue with the activity regardless. The instructor might even choose to do all three of these at different points in time. The task is for students to find ways to adapt to the changes in the activity. Questions typical of experiential change activities could be asked, such as about students' feelings when the changes were made and their resistance to the changes as well as how this manifested in their behaviors. Students may also be able to identify individuals who were more adaptable to the changes and others who were more resistant—i.e., individual predispositions to change such as innovator, resistor, early adopter, etc. Other possible questions include: Were there students who clearly served as change agents within their group, in terms of making the change process easier for other students in the group? How well did the implementation of the changes go—e.g., if rules or people were changed, did the groups follow the new rules or take into account the desires of the new members or did they just proceed as if nothing had changed? The class could also discuss whether and how the two groups adapted to the changes made—e.g., did one group adapt better or faster than the other? Did that give that group an advantage in the negotiation process?

Leadership. Since neither leaders nor group representatives at the negotiation table are assigned in this activity and fairly large groups are used, leader emergence could be discussed during the debriefing. Some of the reasons leaders might emerge are that they have high levels of self-confidence, enjoy negotiating, feel they have some expertise at it, or are extraverted and don't mind speaking in front of the class. Students can also be asked to discussed whether more than one leader emerged and if so, whether and how they competed for the leadership role. The class could also examine the various leadership behaviors exhibited—e.g., what were the more task-oriented leadership behaviors and what were the more relationship-oriented ones? Participative management could be discussed as well. For example, was a participative style used in terms of gathering input from all or most group members and making joint decisions or was the decision-making more centralized involving just the leadership in the group? Was leader consideration shown in terms of understanding and supporting members' desires? Followership is another topic, such as why students agreed with or carried out the decisions of a particular leader who emerged.

Communication. As with most tasks, good communication is central to successfully carrying out the negotiation, but at the same time, the communication is constrained in many ways. This occurs, for example, during the planning process. Although there are no rules that the two teams cannot communicate during the planning process, usually the teams do not. Upon later reflection, they sometimes wish they had. If the activity is done with remote students, communication constraints within each group can be discussed, for example, those occurring between in-person and remote students. Another constraint is time. This occurs for both the communication within the team (the planning and caucusing time limits) and communication between the teams (the negotiation session). The groups also do not have all the information they need for the activity prior to the session. They may have the list of rules, for example, but not the items. This lack of communication can affect their success. Team members also have to communicate –meaning both speaking up and listen carefully—their individual desires for items.

The activity also is useful for discussing communication during conflict, which often is affected by a display of emotions, such as anger, frustration, or resentment. Lying or misleading statements are also typical. This then can affect subsequent communication due to a lack of trust. Finally, it is fruitful to consider the various types of nonverbal communication—for example, how was the classroom arranged for the negotiation and what did this communicate? When did eye-rolling occur during the negotiation and how was that received? When did people stand or sit during the negotiation? Did one group go to the table and get the items they had negotiated for and then hide them or put them aside as if they owned them? If so, how did these behaviors affect the progress of the negotiation? As one can see, there are numerous topics that can be discussed concerning communication during the exercise.

DISCUSSION

There are, of course, limitations to this activity. Many of the limitations have to do with unanticipated outcomes. For these, the professor will need to be able to think quickly of ways to handle them, as was the case with the author's experiences with the group that hid the table with the items or the class in which the groups did not reach an agreement. But these events also allow for different kinds of learning—just not the more planned lessons. For example, the hiding of the table and items on another floor of the building was discussed during the debriefing as an example of the trickery found in the more distributive style of negotiation and the penalty imposed on the group was analogous to a fine imposed by a government agency for violating a law covering union contract negotiation. In the situation when the groups did not reach an agreement, the two key negotiators were asked to have lunch together before the next class, when the negotiation would begin again. As discussed, the idea was for them to have time to build a more non-competitive relationship. However, when they returned to the next class, it was discovered they used this time to negotiate items even though they know some of the items would be changed. As a result, the second negotiation session occurred in record time—something like 5-10 minutes. During the debriefing for this second session, it was discovered that the groups the students were negotiating for were not happy with them because they had not been consulted on the new agreement-i.e., whether those were the items they would accept. This discovery allowed the class to discuss this particular downside of negotiation relationships and how within-group conflict can occur even if between-group conflict has been resolved. Thus, instructors should not worry too much about things not going as planned, particularly since this is precisely the messiness of negotiation that the exercise helps demonstrate. Instead, instructors need to be prepared to modify the activity if surprises happen to leverage these surprises into learning opportunities.

There are limitations as well in doing this synchronously. The remote students, while not at a disadvantage during the planning and caucusing sessions, may be at a disadvantage during the negotiation itself and also during the distribution of items. For example, remote negotiators may have a harder time being in the midst of the conversation with the in-person negotiators. Another disadvantage to doing this with remote students is the cost to mail items. Remote students may be unlikely to want items that will cost money to mail but that don't have much value—e.g., used textbooks or heavy food items—even if the professor will be paying for the mailing. (Note: Professors may be able to use a university spending account and/or their university mailing system at no cost or if this is not available, limitations can be placed by the professor in terms of how much mailing they are willing pay for. Making sure there are mostly lightweight items in the negotiation list is another way to mitigate this limitation.) Furthermore, the remote students are highly dependent on the in-person students in their groups to get the items to them by asking the professor to mail them. The in-person students may not want to bother with doing this for smaller items—for example pieces of candy-- so those items may get distributed to other in-person students instead.

Despite these limitations, the activity is usually very well-received by students. They are engaged during class and they often will let the instructor know after the class that they really enjoyed the activity. They generally find it fun but also quite challenging. In some ways, the activity serves as a bonding experience for the class given the challenge experienced so the activity could be used early in the semester for this purpose. Additionally, and more importantly, students learn lessons about negotiation they don't easily forget because they have concrete experiences to associate them with. This can often be seen in their answers on exam essay questions about the concepts illustrated by the activity, even regarding topics that were not discussed in class during the debriefing. Students also understand more clearly how messy negotiation can be even if carefully planned. For example, in one negotiation, it was clear that both groups were trying very hard to implement integrative negotiation, but the tone that one more competitive negotiator took created tension and the groups then very easily slipped into distributive negotiation tactics. All in all, this activity provides a lot that can be discussed by professors and students and converted into memorable lessons. Students usually do not have to prompted much to discuss them since they are very invested in understanding what just happened and why.

Although no quantitative data has been collected on the effectiveness of the activity as compared with other methods, anecdotal evidence points to its potential for having long-term impact on students. For example, one of the key negotiators in the class that did not reach an agreement during the time given (and therefore had to redo the activity during the next class) later joined the university's HR department and became the university's chief negotiator and contract administrator for the three unions on campus.

To conclude, the pandemic has made it difficult to use the typical experiential exercises found in an organizational behavior class because of the need for social distancing and the greater numbers of remote students. Even after the pandemic, the likelihood of having more synchronous learning environments is increased. One way around teaching both in-person and remote students in the same class is to add online short individual activities for students to post discussions about, but these can be limited in their complexity. Fortunately, with some effort, experiential exercises such as this negotiation activity are translatable to a synchronous learning environment, which allows all students in the class to interact in a longer and more complex learning that provided plenty of examples to discuss and learn from.

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APPENDIX A: RULES OF NEGOTIATION (SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING VERSION):

1. There will be two groups in the class. These will be randomly determined using the Canvas breakout feature. The two groups will be negotiating with each other for items the professor will bring to class. There will be both desirable and undesirable items.
2. Groups may examine the items being negotiated during the preparation phase of the negotiation process. Shortly before class starts, there will be a link to the pictures of the items on Canvas and also a list of the items (main page) and in person students may go to the front of the room and examine the items (maintaining 6-foot distance, of course).
3. All items must be negotiated—no items can be left out of the negotiation or all items will return to the professor.
4. Each group will have 15-20 minutes to prepare a strategy with your group (in Zoom, in Canvas breakout rooms) and 30 minutes to conduct the negotiation with the other group (done in class over the Chat Attach). If a group needs more preparation time, this can be negotiated with the other group. More preparation time will be given only if the other group agrees, but this will take away time from the actual negotiation.
5. If a negotiation agreement is not reached by the end of this 45-minute period, all items revert back to the professor. (If the professor doesn't want the items back, she may schedule another negotiation next week along with extra homework to prepare for that negotiation.)
6. Each group must also negotiate within the group how items "won" in the negotiation will be distributed among group members. This negotiation should occur during the preparation phase. If any conflicts occur when items are distributed within each group, all items won by that group will go back to the professor. (For remote students, the professor will mail items that were won as long as the shipping cost is not too high. Please provide the professor with your mailing address after the class session ends.)
7. For the negotiation session, each group will select 3 members to represent them. In-person representatives will be seated at the front of the room 6 feet apart; remote representatives will speak over Chat-attach/Zoom.
8. Each group is allowed to call up to two 4 –minute "caucuses" with the whole group during the 30-minute negotiation period—e.g., to discuss within the group which proposals the group wants to accept from the other group or which counterproposals the group wants to make. Students will need to re-enter their respective Zoom breakout rooms to discuss during the Caucus time. (If you don't want the other group to hear you during the caucus, in-person students may go to another room in EERC or DOW.)
9. ***Groups may be creative and offer in the negotiation anything else they have (products or services) that they think the other group might want***. However, there has to be some kind of takeaway from the class today—e.g., the actual item or a certificate for the item or service. The item and service have to be delivered/provided to the other group by the next class period. If this doesn't occur, the group that made the promise will have to turn in to the professor all the items it won from the negotiation.
10. The products and services offered in #9 ***must be in good taste***—nothing illegal, unethical, and nothing that will get the professor in trouble. If this rule is broken, all items in the above list go back to the professor.
11. Items ***must be negotiated for***. A strategy like flipping a coin for items or walking away from the items is not acceptable. The reason is that the activity will not adequately illustrate negotiation concepts if this is done, plus what about the fun?

APPENDIX B: CLASS NEGOTIATION EXERCISE ITEM LIST EXAMPLE 1

You and the other group in the class will be negotiating for the following assorted items, thanks (or no thanks) to the SBE faculty, staff, and (sometimes) friends of the SBE who donated to this class endeavor.

One medium (grey) t-shirt and one large (black t-shirt) with the SBE logo

Two SBE coffee mugs

A sparkly journal (blank pages)

A set of Learn Spanish CDs

Assorted used business books

A bag with a coffee container and assorted single serving coffee packets (9)

A bag of miscellaneous marketing swag

A digital auto coin bank

An actual plant and a bobblehead plant

A "vintage" Pictionary game (used) with the option to also obtain three other vintage, but more beat up, Pictionary games (in the Professor's office)

A "vintage" calculator

An eye mask and a cloth billfold

A bag with 34 outlet covers (used) and a set of shower curtain rings (new)

Assorted pumpkins, small to large

A box of moon pies (9), a box of mini pecan pies (9), and a box of Epic bars (9)

A certificate that allows one of the groups extra time on their first presentation (meso paper--17 minutes instead of 12 minutes)

A certificate that allows one of the project groups in class to opt out of the first project presentation altogether (however the group will still have to submit the project paper).

APPENDIX C: CLASS NEGOTIATION EXERCISE ITEM LIST EXAMPLE 2

You and the other group in the class will be negotiating for the following assorted items, thanks (or no thanks) to the SBE faculty, staff, and (sometimes) friends of the SBE who donated to this class endeavor. All items are new unless otherwise indicated. (Click on the link to see the photo.)

One Great Lakes Research Center hat

Two College of Business travel mugs

Three fall-themed plastic tumblers

A CatStax Purrfect Puzzle

A “Mindful” Coffee Mug

Four MTU *School of Business and Economics* ties and four scarves

Four MTU *School of Business and Economics* I-phone stands

A Michigan Tech Make a Difference Day t-shirt

A fuzzy sleep mask and fuzzy socks

A conference (MWAIS2016) bag

A CTL Teaching Showcase zipped binder

Nine *School of Business and Economics* t-shirts (1 small, 2 medium, 3 large, 3 XL)

One box of microwave popcorn packets (18 packets)

Two Pop-tart boxes (6 packets each), hot fudge sundae and s'mores flavors

One box Original Jack Links (20 sticks)

Four Saykilly's yooper milk chocolate bars

A certificate that allows one of the project groups in class to opt out of the first project presentation altogether (however the group will still have to submit the project paper).