



## Is What's Good for the Gander Good for the Goose? A "Semi-Student" Perspective

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*Editors' Note: "Smell the fear?" Kamp forces us to consider how the shock-and-awe of adventure learning might shut down, rather than inspire, negotiation students. He offers practical tips, from his own unique "semi-student" perspective, to help ensure that activities beyond the classroom actually meet the prime objective: making students active participants in their own educational experience.*

### A View from the Fringe

It is a truism in adult education that ideal teachers are students as well, who in the course of educating are themselves educated by the various experiences their students bring to the table. This is doubly the case when the teachers themselves are asked to join in adventure learning, where the true education comes afterward in reflecting on our own experiences and those of others. The newness of the experience provides an education for anyone willing to learn.

But let us not get carried away. Consider: I have been immersed in negotiation theory and its pedagogy for the last three years. I can recite chapter and verse from articles we hope are at the cutting edge of the profession. And yet, not only have I never taught a class on the subject, but not once in between my first exposure to *Getting To Yes* (Fisher, Ury, and Patton 1991) and the second Rethinking Negotiation Teaching conference in Istanbul had I even once engaged in any significant formal economic bargaining that the paying public is seeking to master by taking a negotiation class. Maybe all people are students (or should be), but some people are more students than others.

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Still, my situation of having one foot in each world provides us with an opportunity. As a novice in real-world situations, my impressions of the adventure learning sessions in Istanbul should be relevant to planning negotiation classes for students, particularly those who are in an academic program taking a class as preparation for a career, rather than in executive seminars for those who are already using formal bargaining in their daily lives. Only a year passed between my taking a semester-long negotiation class and going to Istanbul; many of my attitudes towards our adventure learning were not those of an educator trying something new, but rather those of a student facing one in a series of assignments.

Nonetheless, I come from the camp of the educator as well: though I am currently a law student, my previous life experiences include a host of graduate work, academic study, and teaching at the college level. So I understand the necessities involved in trying to help students explore and learn in the classroom. I believe that my in-between status – not quite one or the other – provides a useful lens for teachers evaluating the effectiveness of the adventure learning exercises we undertook in Istanbul. Though informed by some knowledge of the theories involved and pedagogical experience, I still see the world from the perspective of a student.

### **Smell the Fear:**

#### **Dodging Negotiation in a Turkish Bazaar**

It was reassuring to see that, upon learning we would be going to the Istanbul Spice Market in teams and negotiating with its denizens for snack food, many of the teachers in our group had just as much fear and trembling as I.<sup>1</sup> We were tasked in groups of eight, which proved a cumbersome way to work through not only the crowds at the bazaar, but the distractions of rose-scented Turkish Delight, silver jewelry, densely-woven rugs, and above all else ostentatious heaps of ground spices: sharp cumin, rich cinnamon, saffron in bright red and gold. Perhaps a veteran of the bazaar would have remained unseduced; our group splintered. We did retain one veteran, who had lived in Turkey for a number of years and was less overwhelmed by the setting. Nevertheless, the interest in actually doing our assignment with the verve and energy it needed started to wane, as we spent more time exploring and window-shopping.

At one point, I tried to personally negotiate for a few vanilla beans in what could be best described as a parody of principled or even rational negotiation; unnerved by the presumably vast experience of the merchants, I picked a reservation point quite at random, offered a somewhat lower price, and was offered in return a price much higher. When the seller seemed uninterested in coming down

further (pointing out that I was seemingly refusing to negotiate even another Turkish lira, about sixty cents), I panicked, refused to think about whether I actually wanted the beans at that price, and walked out in a hurry. So much for negotiation theory. Eventually, in an effort to fulfill our obligations quickly, we found a set of treats that our informal guide insisted were excellent, offered a slight reduction in price as a nominal negotiation, and continued on our tourist ways.

What did our group learn about the practice of negotiation and culture? Not so very much, other than confronting our own recalcitrance towards negotiation in that setting. What we did discover is that the value of an external exercise, even more so than in the formal atmosphere of the classroom, is entirely dependent on the kinds of people who take part in it. Especially when students are forced to confront the unfamiliar, it becomes clear that adventure learning works best for *adventurers*. What is a fascinating opportunity for some kinds of people could be nearly excruciating for others.<sup>2</sup> This will not come as a surprise to experienced teachers, since the idea that students have vastly different learning styles and therefore need a variety of stimuli in order to thrive has been fully accepted for decades (Joyce 1987). Nevertheless, an exercise that might work wonderfully for a cross-section of negotiation educators could fail to reach many students in a formal program, all with different motivations for taking part in the class.<sup>3</sup> With such a diverse group, there is a variety of factors that will need to be resolved in redesigning the bazaar exercise for use in the semester-class context.

### ***Extroversion vs. Introversion***

According to one study, forty-eight percent of students in law school negotiation classes are introverted, as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Peters 1993: 19). Determining how best to deal with introverts in a structured format such as the classroom setting is not an insuperable obstacle; for example, the reflection paper instead of, or in addition to, an in-class debrief is an excellent device to help these students, who might not be comfortable developing their ideas in a group setting, reap the most from their negotiation experiences. However, the essence of the bazaar exercise is exploration by way of social interaction – highly appealing to the extroverted, but problematic for people who do not draw their energy from such interaction.<sup>4</sup> One task for the exercise designer, therefore, is including people who find this kind of learning uncomfortable. (For more on inclusion issues, see Larson, *Not Everyone Gets to Play*, in this volume.)

### ***Conflict Management Styles***

The Dual Concerns model suggests that there are five different kinds of general preferences for managing conflict, plotted by measuring one's concerns for one's own outcomes against concerns for one's counterpart (Pruitt and Kim 2004).<sup>5</sup> Though rarely does one use the same kind of strategy for every conflict one enters, some people may generally be avoidant of conflict; yielding; competitive; problem-solving; or compromising. Of course, each type will have a different reaction to being forced to negotiate, in real life, for an assignment, and that diversity provides an excellent opportunity to understand our own learning styles.

Yet, just like the extroversion/introversion divide, this difference can complicate getting wholesale participation in the project. Many students in a negotiation class will find the act of negotiation itself appealing: these are the types of people who are likely to have very engaged methods of dealing with conflict, such as problem-solving or competitive bargaining. But, especially in the semester-long law school format, students will be taking a negotiation class for many reasons: to fill a course requirement for some sort of practical experiment, as part of a broader dispute resolution program where the overall focus is on managing conflict instead of seeking it out, or even for self-protection when they are forced to negotiate. These people may well be generally accommodating or avoidant, and may not want to actively seek negotiation. (Such a perspective would explain the dynamic of my own splintered group, where there was no appetite to actually negotiate; we may have been in the minority among educators, but quite possibly less so in a law school classroom.<sup>6</sup>) A persistent question will be to ask to what extent reluctant students should be *required* to be active negotiators.

### ***Experience/Inexperience***

This is not to discount the nervousness of the educators who also went into the bazaar, but for people who may have never conducted an economic negotiation of any significant scale (a distinct possibility in college-age Americans, where negotiation for most items is not part of the culture), to be pitted against sellers who haggle on a daily basis would be quite a sharp introduction to the field. (For reports on such exercises, see Press and Honeyman, *A Second Dive into Adventure Learning* and Manwaring, McAdoo, and Cheldelin, *Orientation and Disorientation*, in this volume.)

Even though in this case the stakes were extremely low from a financial standpoint (unless, I suppose, the negotiation went dreadfully wrong), the emotional stakes involved are sufficiently high to frighten the novice. Some people, again, are excited by this kind of

adventure, but some have no appetite for it whatsoever. There may be cultural dynamics at play too: people from different cultures may have different attitudes towards negotiation that they bring to the table, and the design of a "go-and-negotiate" exercise should be designed to maximize that diversity of personal experience.

Indeed, part of what made the negotiations at the Spice Market such a terrifying experience was the cultural shock. We were already well outside our comfort zones, taking on the mores of a new world, trying to bring our own theories and preconceptions of negotiation into a place that we suspected would have very different rules. Could that same sense of culture shock be brought to a similar adventure in one's home country? That might depend on the extent to which negotiation is common in one's own culture: in a society where bargaining is ever-present there will be little difficulty finding an adventure to equal the Spice Market; in a place like the United States almost any kind of economic bargaining could be unusual. Part of the design of a U.S.-based adventure learning assignment could be whether to allow parties to choose negotiation in contexts with which they are familiar, or to require an unusual and unsettling context, whether in a different subculture (such as an ethnic street market) or by bringing negotiation into an arena where it is not usually encountered.

### *Personal Investment*

In addition, though this was not a dynamic at our conference, the position of a student with respect to such an "assignment" is very different from that of a teacher. When we were in Istanbul, we engaged in the adventure learning as an exploration of a teaching tool and of our own nature as negotiators; in other words, we were co-participants. In a student's position, the very same project becomes an assignment – something required by an authority figure. In the words of Mark Twain, "Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do. Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do." A student in the situation of being required and expected to negotiate may be less willing to do so than someone who is a full partner in the adventure. Obviously, this is a problem in or out of the classroom, and it is quite possible that the difference between the normal school environment and real-world negotiation can provide that investment, replacing a mediocre interest in the subject matter with an interest in newness. It was that newness which induced me to try negotiating for vanilla beans that I did not even particularly need; how many chances does one have to buy something in the Spice Market of Istanbul? Though for me the adventure enabled me to get over my reticence (to a degree), to another student it might provide motivation that counteracts disinterest in the subject matter itself.

### Full Involvement in Adventure Learning

For all these reasons, in many cases the use of bazaar-style adventure learning will have to overcome some significant avoidant behavior. A group of eight traditional law students will not react in the same way as a group of eight teachers – some, even many, may need more prodding out of their comfort zone. It is not difficult to imagine a situation where, with such large groups, there is one bold person who eventually does the negotiation while seven people stand around, slightly abashed, but deeply unwilling to take part: some trusting others to do the assignment adequately (especially in a market or bazaar where a host of distractions await); others who took a negotiation class so they could defend themselves in the horrible circumstance that they should be forced to protect their interests, but absolutely not interested in going out in seeking that conflict; and still others who would make fine negotiators, but are too shy, introverted, or unassertive for cultural reasons to want to take that step. Either way, the formal negotiation is being done by just a few, while the observers are many.

To borrow a metaphor from the technology sector: is this behavior a bug, or a feature? One approach to designing these adventure learning exercises would be to accept the different roles as a function of different learning styles. After all, if introverts are likelier to learn less from social interaction and more from internal review afterwards, then let them take part in the intra-group negotiations regarding how best to fulfill the assignment, observe the negotiations carefully, write reflection papers, and stay essentially within the role they prefer. This way, they will not be forced to take an approach that is unfamiliar to them, and they will get more out of the exercise. People who are uninvested for other reasons may be drawn in by allowing them more input into the design of the exercise (Nelken 2009; Nelken, McAdoo, and Manwaring 2009; Druckman and Ebner, *Enhancing Concept Learning*, in this volume). Either there could be a classroom discussion on the sorts of materials that are to be negotiated for and what the negotiation's goals are going to be, or the options could be more free-form: if the admonition is merely that the parties should choose something interesting to negotiate, but nothing more specific, that in itself may be sufficient to induce buy-in and personal investment on the part of students who otherwise might not be willing to engage.

But is enabling people to *not negotiate* a good idea for a negotiation class? One of the underlying tropes of the modern negotiation classroom is that conflict, and negotiation about that conflict, happens all the time. That understanding is reflected in the interest in discussing the intra-group negotiations in the adventure learning

exercises: these are the sort of non-economic discussions of interests and perceptions that are a part of everyday life in many of our relationships. Understanding such negotiations is valuable. But adventure learning – in this case, integrating real-life negotiation into the classroom – is a unique opportunity to bring true, formalized economic negotiation into the curriculum. Unless a course is comprised largely of such elements, opportunities to hone one's skill in actual bargaining situations will be limited. In such a case, it seems like a disservice to design the assignment in such a way that there are fewer primary negotiators and more observers. Many of the students will have taken the class precisely so they could succeed in formal bargaining situations: as educators, we should give the students what they are asking for.

Moreover, in many of the cases it is precisely those students who are less likely to take the role of primary negotiator in a larger group who most need to practice their skills in such a setting. Socially reticent, conflict-avoidant, or yielding-style students may have been less likely to find themselves in this formal setting, because it is less appealing to them. Students just out of college may not have had the opportunity to take part in significant economic negotiations, and may be unwilling to take that risk now for the first time. Kevin Avruch (2009: 164) suggests that teaching, as compared to training, should have the effect of unsettling the assumptions of the learners and forcing them to confront new ideas and ways of behaving. An assignment where the parties are allowed to stay in their comfortable roles, instead of practicing the skills that the class is supposed to teach, may be less helpful to new negotiators. Of course, this is an admonition from personal experience: those of us who for various reasons are less likely to seek out experiences that test us should, at least once, be forced to do so.

### **A Sample Lesson Plan**

The following adventure learning exercise is designed to work relatively late in the semester, after the parties have been introduced to the basic theories and understandings of negotiation and have perhaps participated in a simulation or two, to familiarize themselves with the basic structure of such interaction. It would function best over two or three weeks, to allow the students to choose a negotiation, act on it, and debrief/reflect on it.

- Students would be divided into pairs. If at all possible, it would be helpful to have the members of each dyad be different in personality or negotiating style, though that might be difficult to accomplish. Using pairs would require both parties to be equal partners: since there is only one negotia-

tor and one observer at any time, there is no opportunity to avoid any of the responsibilities.

- Outside of class, the two people should determine two situations that they each will negotiate. There is an array of restrictions that the teacher could use to make this more pertinent to their lives. If there is a possibility of classic, market-style negotiation in the area, then the professor could simply require that all the parties do at least one if not both of their negotiations in that setting. In Istanbul, of course, the plan was to negotiate snack foods: if time and setting allowed, that could be used here as well, or other items could be used.<sup>7</sup> Another restriction the teacher could use, in order to make the negotiation take on more meaning to the students, would be to require it to be in an unusual area, something outside of the students' comfort zone. If they are accustomed to bargaining in a market, perhaps they would have to bargain in a department store instead. That newness would force people who might otherwise try to avoid new situations to confront those fears and test their own skills.
- Of course, while one student negotiates, the other will observe – since there will be two negotiations, for the second the roles will switch.
- Within a week or two, there could be an in-class debriefing, followed by a reflection paper, making sure that students who learn best by either method would get the most out of the post-experience breakdown.

The primary advantage to this lesson plan, of course, is that it expects everyone to be an active participant: rather than relying on the real-world nature of the adventure learning itself to induce investment, it is set up so that people who might otherwise not want to stretch their boundaries are forced to. Students are allowed to come up with their own preferred negotiation (within certain limits), further enhancing their own buy-in to the process – and there is no reason that the class as a whole could not run an in-class contest for best negotiation. And if possible, it expects exactly the sorts of economic negotiation that students, especially younger students in the United States, might not have had the opportunity to undertake in the past, and gives them the chance to practice precisely the skills which many have taken the class in order to master.

## Conclusion

As a student, by the end of my own negotiation class, the entire matter began to take on a surreal abstraction. Simulations can only

teach so much: while they may serve a purpose, they fail to capture the richness of real-world negotiation. Adventure learning, as the other articles in this section of the book demonstrate, hopes to transcend that by making the stakes and the class work real and pertinent to the students' lives. I believe that for a semester-long class, these exercises may be the best way to make the nature of negotiation real. But because of the independent nature of such learning, adventure assignments, for any number of reasons, risk allowing students to avoid taking active roles in the work – not because they are bad students, but because to be an active negotiator would be difficult and unsettling in those circumstances. In order to avoid that danger, adventure learning using formalized negotiation as a foundation should follow a few simple rules. Such an exercise should:

- Try to maximize student input into the design of the adventure.
- Use small groups – dyads or triads – in order to ensure that everyone is forced to take an active role.
- Actively seek to put students into negotiating roles with which they are uncomfortable; the newness of the experience may force learners to test their beliefs instead of merely confirming them.

Settings like the Spice Market provide a crucible in which many of our beliefs about negotiation and about ourselves as negotiators may dissolve and lose their structure, challenging us to find formulations that can resist the heat and pressure. While we cannot expect every classroom to have such a place available to them, the suggestions above may help to provide a workable equivalent.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Roy Lewicki, at the debrief of our exercise, described the atmosphere with the pungent comment in the section header.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Larson, *Not Everyone Gets to Play*, in this volume. Though he describes the more extreme concern of Asperger's Syndrome and other disabilities, even "unusually high reticence" or what might be called the lack of an adventuresome spirit, in an environment where one is not absolutely required to take affirmative action, can completely shut down one's role in the exercise.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest that negotiation educators are not at least somewhat diverse in their personalities and interests, merely that they are somewhat less so than the population of students as a whole. The population of people who go in for teaching negotiation is far from random.

<sup>4</sup> This is simplified somewhat. Arguably, many people may still be excited by a negotiating adventure even if they do not draw energy from social in-

teraction, and even extroverts may be shy in unusual social situations. But, insofar as introversion and social reticence are at least somewhat related, we can use the former as a stand-in for the latter.

<sup>5</sup> For a more in-depth exploration of the Dual Concerns model and how it is used in negotiation pedagogy, see Ebner and Kamp, *Relationship 2.0*, in this volume.

<sup>6</sup> Consider, for example, the student of Sandra Cheldelin's who did not bring enough money, in the hope of avoiding the negotiation at hand (Manwaring, McAdoo, and Cheldelin, *Orientation and Disorientation*, in this volume). The intra-group negotiations in that exercise provide one of the ways, of course, that the students who might want to avoid the primary bargaining around which the assignment is centered nonetheless can gain from the exercise.

<sup>7</sup> If the market did not serve food, one could think of other games – e.g., parties could go in with no more than a small amount of cash and try to come out with the object that by class vote was deemed the most valuable (to which any leftover cash would be added). If a grade bonus were given to the winners, then the stakes of the negotiation would be higher for the parties as well.

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