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ASSESSING NEGOTIATORS' PROFICIENCY WITH A NEGOTIATION ROLE PLAY

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the possibility of using an experiential negotiating role-play as an instrument for assessing students' proficiency in and understanding of negotiation. The role-play is a modified version of an existing one, AFTER NAFTA (Butler, 1996). The new version, appropriate for assessment purposes, is described.

**THE JAPANESE ARE COMING: AN
ASSESSMENT TOOL**

The learning objectives of this exercise are: (a) to explore the effects of trust, information sharing, and conflict styles on negotiated outcomes; (b) to demonstrate the need to determine whether goals are compatible before deciding on a conflict style; (c) to illustrate two types of integrative agreements, logrolling and bridging; and (d) to give an example of two faces of power, personal and socialized.

THE JAPANESE ARE COMING is a negotiating role-play involving two negotiators and one observer. For purposes of assessment, the observer should be a trained graduate student or a faculty member. The negotiators play the roles of mayors of adjacent towns. Their task is threefold: (a) agree on a location for a new Japanese manufacturing plant -- hence the name of the role-play, (b) calculate the total income or loss from locating the plant where agreed, and (c) achieve an important, personal goal. The observer's job is to report on the process and outcomes of the negotiation.

Role of Mayor Lewis of Lakeview, PA

You are Mayor Lewis of Lakeview, PA, a medium-sized, mostly working class town. Unemployment in your town is currently near 15%. You have learned that the Kokishi Company, of Japan, is planning to build a new manufacturing plant in your area. Such a plant would provide jobs for all your townspeople who want to work.

One thing about Lakeview that Kokishi likes is Lakeview Technical College, which specializes in employee training. Lakeview Tech is denoted by an asterisk on your map.

The problem is that Lakeview does not have an emergency facility with squad members trained in handling potential hazards from the chemicals that Kokishi will be using. It will cost Lakeview \$300,000 to build an emergency facility and hire trained technicians.

Lakeview has five types of zones: open space, residential, woodlands, parks, and commercial. (See Simulation and Gaming, December, 1996, for the required maps.) Locating the plant in some of these zones would cost the town a net loss in taxes and other costs per acre. Locating it in other zones would bring a net gain per acre. These per-acre cost and benefit figures are on the map.

Kokishi's criteria for locating their plant are the following:

- 1. The plant needs exactly 200 acres of land. This is how much Kokishi will buy.**
- 2. No more than one zone can be between the zone containing the plant and the zone containing an emergency facility.**
- 3. No more than one zone can be between the zone containing the plant and the zone containing a technical college.**

You are thinking about asking the town finance committee to study the feasibility of building an emergency facility. But, before doing that, you decide to discuss the situation with Mayor Watson of Waterville, PA, the town just south of Lakeview. You have heard that Mayor Watson is trying to attract Kokishi to Waterville.

You have learned from your experiences during the past years that **you can not trust Mayor Watson personally**. There has been a high level of fear and suspicion between the two of you.

Virtually all the citizens of Lakeview want very much to attract Kokishi to your town. However, **your primary, number-one, Life-long dream has always been for your son,**

Joe, to go to the University of Pennsylvania. Joe has earned good grades in high school and wants to study psychology in college. You have been in touch with the University of Pennsylvania about a scholarship in psychology, but all they wanted to talk about was a scholarship in sociology. Ironically, the person you talked with said that any high school student with decent grades who applied for the sociology scholarship would be quite certain to get it. You feel frustrated because that won't help Joe at all, and you can't afford to send him to college without a scholarship. You would gladly forget all about the Kokishi plant if Joe could have a chance at a college education.

Role of Mayor Watson of Waterville, PA

The role of Mayor Watson is identical to that of Mayor Lewis except that Waterville has an emergency facility, Watson's son is named Mike, Watson knows about a scholarship in psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, and Mike wants to study sociology.

The roles allow two types of win-win, integrative agreements -- logrolling and bridging. First, there are ways the negotiators can logroll by trading items of low value for items of high value. They can locate the plant on the border within one zone of both the technical college in Lakeview and the emergency facility in Waterville. Thus both towns can avoid the \$300,000 building expenses. This issue represents socialized power, used for achieving organizational goals. Second, the negotiators can bridge by refocusing on what they want most -- educations for their sons. If they share the relevant information, each negotiator discovers that his/her opponent knows about a scholarship for his/her son and they can swap scholarships.

This issue addresses personal power used for achieving selfish goals.

Scoring for Assessment

Students' negotiating proficiency can be scored in terms of both inputs and outcomes, all of which are reported by the observer. The measured inputs include the negotiators' understanding of their roles, initial trust expectations, conflict style (pursuit of the negotiators' own and their opponent's interests), and information sharing

(relevance, accuracy, and completeness). Outputs include the fairness of the agreement (equality of their towns' profit and both sons' receipt of scholarships), the efficiency of the process (time taken to discover the integrative solutions and to agree on terms), the efficiency of the outcome (lack of formal precautions taken to ensure fulfillment of the agreement, and the effectiveness of the negotiation (achievement of both the social and personal goals -- successful location of the plant in a profitable zone and receipt of the scholarship).

Although the inputs and outcomes are important in that they indicate how well a negotiator performed in that particular negotiation, a more important criterion for assessment is students' understanding of the dynamics of the negotiation. This understanding is crucial because it allows students to generalize from the specific negotiation they conducted in class to more important negotiations they will conduct in their personal and professional careers.

Students' understanding can be assessed through their explanation of the activities, communications, and feelings (the emergent system) that occurred during the negotiation. I believe strongly that such an explanation should be driven by one or more theories. (In my MBA courses, I call them conceptual models or tools.) Therefore, I assess students' understanding of role-play dynamics by requiring them to write rigorous, structured analyses of the role-plays. I expect students to apply a number of conceptual models they have learned in the course. For THE JAPANESE ARE COMING and other negotiation role plays, these models include: (a) Zand's (1972) model of the dynamics of mist, (b) Thomas's (1990) and Rahim's (1992) dual concern model of conflict styles, (c) Fisher and Ury's (1981) approach to principled negotiation, and (d) McClelland and Burnham's (1976) model of socialized vs. personal power.

Note: See Simulation and Gaming, December, 1996, for copies of the required maps of Lakeview and Waterville, instructor's briefing, Kokishi president's briefing, pro-forma income statements, observers' report form, negotiators' report form, and references.