

## 11.255 Negotiation & Conflict Resolution in the Public Sector – Self Reflection on Parker v. Gibson – 2/28/2021

This first role-playing exercise was a very valuable experience. After reading the preparatory materials, I was determined to play hardball. After the exercise, I've identified three areas where I can improve in future negotiations: anchoring, limiting my externalization of thought as the negotiation proceeds, and prioritizing probing the other party's BATNA over explaining my own.

Anchoring was a challenge both before the exercise and during it. The dearth of information about the scenario made it very hard to determine much about the other party's presumed BATNA and resistance point. I was inspired by how thorough Steve from the Elmtree example in Raiffa's piece was in conducting market research ahead of the negotiation. As I tried to think through my neighbor's BATNA and resistance point, though, all I had was three pieces of information: 1) the initial purchase price, 2) the offer from one other buyer, and 3) the lack of interest from other neighbors. I eventually determined that my neighbor's resistance point was likely between \$15,000 (based on the low initial purchase price of the lot and the offer from the other buyer) and \$40,000 (if they were very motivated by the unique opportunity to seize land right next to their home). Based on this conjecture, I determined to set an anchor of \$50,000. Still, though, I felt I didn't know enough to drop anchor first: similar to Steve in the Elmtree example, I let my opponent anchor first and planned to re-anchor at \$50,000 regardless of her initial offer. When she surprised me by only offering \$8,000, though, I lost confidence. I think in that moment the combined anchoring effect of her \$8,000 and the \$15,000 offered by the potential homebuyer made me feel that I couldn't hope to receive a price much higher than my resistance point. Out of a lack of confidence, I dropped my re-anchor to \$35,000. In the future, I would stick to my initial plan.

Externalizing my thought process is another area for improvement. I made sure to start the conversation off with small talk, which was helpful. At later points in the negotiation, however, I felt the need to tack a justification on to each of my offers and counter-offers before my neighbor asked me for the reason. This is not best practice for distributive negotiations, though: I should leave it to the opposing party to ask questions of me. I think I took too seriously the mandate from Malhotra and Bazerman via PON to make explicit the concessions that are being made, and instead erred toward making all things explicit. Hiding my motivations does not come naturally to me, and I hope this proves to be less of an inhibition as we practice more integrative approaches to negotiation (but this remains to be seen). For now, I aim to speak 50% less in future exercises and instead push that work onto my opponent.

The final area of improvement is also related to listening rather than speaking. During the exercise, I explained my own BATNA well and bolstered the fact that I had good options aside from selling to my neighbor. I stated that I could either sell my house along with the lot *or* keep the lot and start a passion project in my retirement there. I am proud of making that clear, since it embodies the concept of "falling in love with three rather than one" from Bazerman cited in the PON article called "Are You Ready to Negotiate?" If I did this exercise again, though, I would focus more on asking my opponent questions about her plans for expanding her home to understand her BATNA better. Listening to the justifications she did share, I had already gained some good information to exploit: for example, she and her husband had already saved up a specific amount of cash for the expansion, and they wanted it to be on the east side of the house because it gets better light. Lewicki and Litterer suggest that I should have gained more information, and then poked some holes in the idea that she could just build the expansion on top of her already-small side yard instead of on the additional lot.

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