Part V

Negotiation Across Cultures: Future Directions
Wind of Change: The Future of Cross-Cultural Negotiation

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Introduction

In the study and practice of international business, change is a constant. Discoveries are made in different places, markets open up, resources are uncovered, and innovation flourishes. Businesses can thrive, or perish, based on their ability to foresee and/or adapt to change. Over the past couple of decades, the study of change has become a curricular topic in business studies, with many leading business schools offer courses, graduate certificates, and full graduate degree programs in managing change. Moreover, over the past few years, organizational change has become a popular topic for PhD and EdD programs both inside and outside of traditional business and management educational frameworks. There is a broad literature on change management addressing both coping with change and proactively initiating change. Initiating change processes is part of a manager’s role, and guiding a company through change is a process leaning on leadership skills (see, e.g., Hayes, 2018; Paton & McCalman, 2008).

Negotiation is often mentioned in this literature and in these studies, as a tool that managers employ for leading change. However, the connection between negotiation and change is much more direct. Negotiation itself can
be described as a change process. Two parties meet, seeking to plan a new future through an agreement. Essentially, they are exploring whether it is feasible for them to jointly create change. Interestingly, this perspective is not commonly encountered in the negotiation literature. This literature often discusses how to change minds, seeing negotiation as a persuasive endeavor, but doesn't apply an overall lens of viewing negotiation as joint change planning.

This is not the negotiation field's only omission with regard to change. This chapter raises the suggestion that negotiators are changing and that negotiation itself might be changing.

The current state of negotiation research and practice, however, continues to build upon previous experiments and models without questioning their current validity and applicability. In fact, reviewing the literature of the past 50 years gives one the sense that change is not a factor; people negotiate today, for the most part, as they did several decades or even thousands of years ago. Looking ahead, should we anticipate that negotiation interactions would be any different from those we have described over the past few decades, up to, and including, this book?

In a previous article, I have suggested that not only is the occurrence of such change likely, but it is likely to speed up and become more evident (Ebner, 2017a). In this chapter, I provide support for the notion of change and its acceleration—and explain why this will be particularly acute in cross-cultural negotiation interactions.

One powerful force of change that has affected our world powerfully, if perhaps unevenly, is the technological revolution of the past couple of decades. While it is hard to pinpoint any particular date as the starting point for the front edge of this wave, we might generally point to the period in which the impact of the new developments in information technology, communications, and engineering became accessible, ubiquitous, and even unavoidable for many of us. The effects on business were immense; the effects on people—while less obvious, for a while—are no less portentous.

Immersion in a technological world has changed business, society, and individual people. In addition, in changing people, it has changed people-as-negotiators. It may even be that the core process of negotiation itself is changing, in response to changes in negotiators. In this chapter, after demonstrating several areas of human change, I try to explain the field’s lack of attention to it. I then identify some negotiation-related traits and concepts that are clearly in flux, posing them as examples of what might be, in reality, a much wider spectrum of changes. The iceberg metaphor lends itself nicely to this issue: We are only beginning to see clearly identifiable areas of change rising above the waters; one would do well to consider how much more lies beneath.
In addition to these changes affecting business negotiation as they affect all areas and types of negotiation, the idea of negotiation change merges with the theme of cross-cultural business negotiation even more powerfully when you consider the notion of cultural change. If culture deeply affects negotiation, cultural change must do so as well. When you look at currents of change from the perspective of culture, you can identify forces generating and resisting change. These forces do not all fit neatly together; for example, we can concurrently identify forces of globalism as well as nationalism. Some changes are overt, sharp, and sudden. Migration, religious awakenings, and political movements can rapidly shift countries and regions. Other shifts might be gentler, causing slow culture shifts over time. Additionally, moving beyond the effects of the technological revolution on individuals and its effects on individuals and individual negotiators, we can look at the technological revolution as a core driver of broader change in society and culture, which also contribute to change in individual human behavior. Technology, therefore, contributes to negotiation change on two levels, influencing individuals directly as well as influencing them through affecting the culture of the society they live in. Both levels of impact portend change for negotiators and negotiation; both are compounded in the context of cross-cultural negotiation.

Considering all this, this chapter ends with some forecasts regarding the future landscape of international cross-cultural negotiation and recommendations to managers and negotiation practitioners for facing tomorrow’s challenges.

Our Changing World

The contemporary world that negotiators operate in has experienced a generation of unprecedented change. This is not just a poetic sentiment, of the type that virtually any generation could have voiced. As discussed below, change is measurable, and, it is a matter of scientific fact that the past 20–30 years have seen more change across more areas than any of its predecessors. Predominantly, the changes of the past generation have been caused by the wave of technological advancement and human response to living in a technologically immersed world. In this section, I will introduce some of the impacts of this change on people in general and then proceed to apply that to people in their role as negotiators.

The technological advancements of the past generation have introduced technology into every corner of our lives, every element of our workflow, and just about every pocket of our clothes. This has had far-reaching effects, which break down into several categories of change:
We don’t only change our behaviors; our new behaviors are rearranging us. The fact that we now conduct our banking and shopping online demonstrates behavioral change; the fact that we now trust anonymous algorithms and unseen corporations to handle our financial resources is indicative of new trust patterns we now have.

We don’t only interact in new ways; we are developing new communication formats for these interactions: Emoticons and internet slang used to be dismissed as teenage jargon; today, you are familiar with a substantial dictionary of internet-age abbreviations and emojis and you use them in your own communications.

We don’t only use our bodies and brains differently; our brains and bodies are physiologically changing to adapt to these uses: In particular, our brains are mapping out new neurological networks to engage with the technology that we utilize; this develops certain areas of the brain at the expense of others.

When change happens, people respond to it. We have emotional responses, identity-based responses, and behavioral responses. Whatever our responses, though, we have certainly changed. As we change the things we do, the way we do things, and the way we feel about what we do—the things we do change us. Some of us might find it easiest to discuss this change by relating to generational differences. Others are self-reflective enough to recognize that to one extent or another we ourselves have changed.

How is living in a technologically immersed world changing us? The simplest place to begin is through examining changes in our activities—changes in what we do and how we do things. Let us consider changes in non-negotiation activities, to make the case for change effects; afterward, we work our way toward changes in negotiation activity.

Behavioral Change

Our change processes have not been identical (across people) or linear (across time). And yet, clearly, many of us, in many significant areas of life, do things differently from how we used to. You may have gone from shopping in stores directly to shopping online, hesitating before you did so; others may have utilized mail-order catalogues decades ago, and therefore online commerce at a distance did not involve any significant change to them. On the other hand, these same people may have felt they were taking a great leap when they shifted to online banking or consulting with a medical caregiver online. Also, note that we have not all arrived at the same end result, engaging in the same pursuits online. This is only to be expected—we were different before, and we
remain different in a technologically immersed world. However, the way we do things, and the differences between us, have all changed. Changes in how we “do things” manifest in all our endeavors: professional, personal, interpersonal, communal, and spiritual. Consider your sources of information 20 years ago: newspapers for current events, libraries for research. When was the last time you utilized either of those? Do you go out for entertainment as much as you used to, or do you utilize in-house entertainment activities more? And, when you do go out—do you do the things you used to do?

Changes in behavioral patterns resulting from our interaction with technology affect us cognitively and psychologically. For example, it changes the sources of information we access (e.g., Google instead of the library), which in turn changes the types, sources, and soundness of information we rely on (e.g., our reliance on anonymous web sources or Wikipedia for non-critical issues). As we shall see, this closes the circle by further reinforcing our new behavioral patterns.

Over the past few years, I have found it interesting, when engaging with people in discussions about technology and change, to note that people do not only vary in terms of how their lives have been fundamentally altered by technological developments. We also tend to have one or more unique areas in which we reject technology-driven change, often as a point of pride. If the first topic is people’s history with technology, this latter issue reflects what I call their resistory. Some people refuse to use a certain social media platform. Others shun e-readers and insist on paper and print. Still others hand-write letters or birthday or thank-you cards.

Whatever our precise history with technology has been, and whatever our own resistory is, the balance clearly leans toward change. Consider the following list of behaviors, and you’d agree that your behavior today is quite different from 20 or even 5 years ago—regarding several of them—and that suffices to drive the change point home:

- How do you purchase your home or office supplies?
- How do you administrate your finances? Move money from one person to another?
- How do you read books?
- How do you plan and arrange your travel?
- How do you communicate with your family, friends, and co-workers?
- How do you curate our memories?
- How do you catch up on what friends are doing?
- How do you intake your news media?
- How do you make requests, or file reports, at work?
There are many other behavioral changes. Some are minute; for example, we read web pages differently than we read books (in terms of eye movement around the page) and therefore intake information differently (Carr, 2010). Some are much more extensive, such as the fundamental question of how we use our time and other resources. Clay Shirky (2010) has pointed out the shift, in the early-to-mid 2000s, from internet users as consumers, to internet users as creators. The shift to Web 2.0 enabled every end user of the internet to create content—blog posts, Facebook messages or replies, YouTube videos, memes, and so on; previously, internet users had been consumers of content that others had created (e.g., news sites or other informational sources). Naturally, this saw an outburst of creative effort. Concurrently, Shirky (2010) has pointed out, the internet has disrupted our addiction to TV. Consider how many hours of TV you now watch daily, as opposed to ten years ago! Shirky (2009) points out that whereas not all of the creative activity that this freed-up time generates is high quality, some of it is. Many people created memes involving their cats; however, many others created Wikipedia. The important point, for our purpose, is that humans are engaging in behaviors that are different from those they had engaged in previously and, that many of these changes involve new actions that are creative, empowered, other-directed, collaborative, and generous (yes, generous: Both the Wikipedia editor and the cat-meme creator are working voluntarily to benefit others with information or a giggle). These new channels and characteristics of human behavior certainly relate to negotiation. Before exploring negotiation, though, we briefly touch on other areas of human change.

**Cognitive, Psychological, and Physical Change**

I’ve expanded on behavioral changes at length, for two reasons: First, it is the level at which it is easiest for each of us to recognize personal examples of change; second, because behavioral change triggers a much deeper and significant level of change. Change the things you do or the way you do things—and your brain will change itself in order to be most effective at the tasks you assign it. This, in a nutshell, is the essence of the field of **neuroplasticity** (see Carr, 2010; Liou, 2010; Small & Vorgan, 2008). Our brain evolves all the time, training itself toward optimality. It does so by creating new neural networks and abandoning or dismantling others that are no longer required. Hence, changing the ways we behave, and the stimuli we are exposed to, literally changes us physically.
Neuroplasticity is used to explain significant generational gaps between pre-internet and post-internet generations. The latter grew up exposed to a much different (and expanded) array of stimuli than the former. As a result, their brains are physically wired differently. Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan (2008) have used the findings on neuroplasticity to explain two oft-voiced suggestions about the younger generation: That they are far more tech-savvy than the generation that preceded them, but they have less social and interactional skills. As they put it:

Young minds tend to be the most exposed, as well as the most sensitive, to the impact of digital technology. Today’s young people in their teens and twenties, who have been dubbed Digital Natives, have never known a world without computers, 24-hour TV news, Internet, and cell phones—with their video, music, cameras, and text messaging. Many of these Natives rarely enter a library, let alone look something up in a traditional encyclopedia; they use Google, Yahoo, and other online search engines. The neural networks in the brains of these Digital Natives differ dramatically from those of Digital Immigrants: people—including all baby boomers—who came to the digital/computer age as adults but whose basic brain wiring was laid down during a time when direct social interaction was the norm. The extent of their early technological communication and entertainment involved the radio, telephone, and TV. As a consequence of this overwhelming and early high-tech stimulation of the Digital Native’s brain, we are witnessing the beginning of a deeply divided brain gap between younger and older minds—in just one generation. What used to be simply a generation gap that separated young people’s values, music, and habits from those of their parents has now become a huge divide resulting in two separate cultures. The brains of the younger generation are digitally hardwired from toddlerhood, often at the expense of neural circuitry that controls one-on-one people skills. (p. 3)

In a previous paper (Ebner, 2017a) I’ve noted several specific areas in which our immersion in technology is bound to change our mental patterns, cognitively and, ultimately, physiologically. Consider the notion of focus—channeling your thoughts on a single topic or task. How often, in your workday, do you find yourself engaging in what is trendily and positively described as “multitasking?” Multitaskers have been found to have difficulty in switching between tasks (Ofir, Nass, & Wagner, 2009), and there is always a price to pay for multitasking over single-tasking—not only in terms of efficiency of task completion but also in terms of increased stress (Mark, Gudith, & Klocke, 2008; Pattison, 2008).
Our ability to focus has greatly diminished, and we are constantly distracted by a plethora of information and communications sources, all actively beeping or flashing to gain our attention or passively drawing us in through offering instant gratification (see Mark, Iqbal, Czerwinski, Johns, & Sano, 2016). Silicon Valley recruits the best and the brightest to design these distraction and gratification methods (Bosker, 2016).

With so much stimulation, we rarely experience real “down-time”—the time our brain needs to rest and to process and store the stimuli it has been exposed to. Similarly, we rarely experience “boredom”—alone with no task and time on our hands, we slip out our phone and tap on an app, a news site, or a game. A final area of cognitive and physiological change related to neuroplasticity has to do with memory. Consider how many phone numbers you knew by heart 20 years ago. Today, do you remember ten phone numbers? The moment our phones preserved our “contacts,” our brains stopped memorizing numbers. This is a manifestation of a wider phenomenon that goes beyond memory, dubbed “cognitive offloading” (Risko & Gilbert, 2016; Thompson, 2007). Our brains have offloaded tasks that technology can perform for us to that technology, clearing space and bandwidth for other tasks. In that sense, we are moving along a continuum from being “humans who have and use technology” to becoming cyborgs—technologically-enhanced human beings. The more instantaneous and behind the scenes of our consciousness the connections between our minds, bodies, and technology become, the further we move along that continuum.

What other functions—particularly, those that might pertain directly or indirectly to negotiation—might have we offloaded? While I cannot provide a full answer to that important point (in part, because we have each offloaded selectively; e.g., some of us relay on Waze or Google Maps to get from place to place, others simply know the way or look at a map like we used to), once again the important part is that people are changing; this time, we are talking about change that you can physically identify and measure, if you have a convenient fMRI machine around to hook people up to.

**Interactional Change**

Above, I’ve noted the opinions stating that younger people today have fewer interactional skills than those who grew up in a previous generation. The literature on this is not as convincing on this as you would assume, which I think is indicative of the degree to which we are in a period of transition. Anecdotal reports pile up, but the science isn’t in yet. Still, as data gather up, it would not surprise anyone if it will exist in the near future. The anticipated
interactional changes will affect every area of life, including negotiation. As Small and Vorgan (2008) put it:

As the brain evolves and shifts its focus toward new technological skills, it drifts away from fundamental social skills, such as reading facial expressions during conversation or grasping the emotional context of a subtle gesture … With the weakening of the brain’s neural circuitry controlling human contact, our social interactions may become awkward, and we tend to misinterpret, and even miss, subtle, nonverbal messages. Imagine how the continued slipping of social skills might affect an international summit meeting ten years from now when a misread facial cue or a misunderstood gesture could make the difference between escalating military conflict or peace. (p. 2)

I suggest that rather than looking critically at people conveniently younger than us—as older generations have always done, throughout the generations (this aspect of human behavior seems impervious to change)—we look at ourselves. No matter your age, if you can think back 15 years, you qualify for this exercise: Consider the networks you had 15 years ago and those you have now. Then, consider your modes of interaction with people in those networks. You will probably discover that some of the following hold true for you:

• You have, overall, more people you consider to be in your networks than you used to.
• You have more types of networks, and more networks overall, than you used to. “Professional,” “friends,” and “family” no longer cover many of the connections we have.
• You are more aware of day-to-day details in the lives of many of the people in your networks—their activities, moods, and events.
• You communicate differently with your networks. You may never had sent out a newsletter about yourself 15 years ago or even a “here’s what I’ve done this year”; today, you communicate with some of your networks in the aggregate, through a blog post or a Facebook status.
• You speak less on the phone with people.
• You engage with people over different communication platforms and have new norms or patterns regarding who you engage with via a particular platform and who you do not.
• You meet with fewer people face to face.
• When you do meet with people face to face, you are rarely engaged with them exclusively. Each of you has a device or three on the table, you respond to their prompts, and when your friend gets up to order coffee, you check your email or open Facebook.
If you’ve nodded at even two or three of those, that is enough to make the simple point that—our generational positioning notwithstanding—our interactional patterns are changing. By changing our interactional patterns, we increase certain skills and senses and diminish others. Our brain, following our lead, redesigns itself to adapt.

**Negotiators Are People Too**

If people are significantly changing, how does that affect them as negotiators? As this chapter has occasionally hinted, it probably affects them significantly, even if most of these changes have not been tested in the context of negotiation. In the next few sections, I briefly describe three areas strongly connected to negotiation in which human change is clearly visible. Each also notes why these areas of change are particularly significant in cross-cultural interactions. This is followed by addressing the topic of culture change, heads-on.

However, before introducing negotiator change, I’d like to point out and exclude one area of change that has received attention in the negotiation literature. Pointing this out serves three purposes: It will clarify just what I mean when I discuss change in negotiators and negotiation; it will explain why the negotiation field has not paid more attention to the notion of negotiator change; and finally, it will answer a question that may have been on your mind since you first began reading this chapter: The negotiation literature has dealt with change, hasn’t it? Haven’t you read all those papers about negotiating via technology—email negotiation, negotiating via videoconferencing, and so on?

**The Instrumental Smokescreen**

Actually, I have not only read the literature on negotiation via technology, I have actively contributed to it. It is precisely that experience that led me to realize that the negotiation field’s approach to exploring technology in negotiation was serving as a smokescreen, keeping researchers focused on one type of change while veiling far more significant changes. My own work in this area was just as much to blame as anyone else’s.

Indeed, over the past two decades, a sizeable body of literature has developed on negotiation and technology. Most of this literature is similar, in terms of its conceptual mindset: Key differences exist between negotiation as practiced at the physical, face-to-face, table and negotiation conducted online, in
a technologically mediated environment. The differences are called “media effects.” Media effects are nearly always seen as challenges or threats to successful negotiation. These must be overcome; therefore, the literature provides guidance on how to skirt the dangers presented by the medium so that negotiators can conduct processes that are as similar as possible to face-to-face processes. This body of literature continues to flourish and provides contemporary negotiators the insights they need in order to successfully negotiate online.

The field’s research into the effects of technology on negotiation has focused nearly exclusively on such media effects. What are the differences between negotiating face to face and negotiating via videoconferencing (Ebner, 2017b)? What are the effects of utilizing email for negotiation (Barsness & Bhappu, 2004; Ebner, 2017c)? Based on what we know about media effects, which medium would support a certain type of negotiation (Schneider & McCarthy, 2017)?

The interest of the negotiation field in technology has therefore focused on technology as instrumental for negotiation; it has side effects—mostly negative—that negotiators must learn to circumvent or cope with. A minority of the literature has pointed at constructive things that negotiators could do with technology (Thiessen, Miniato, & Hiebert, 2012; Zeleznikow, 2017).

In a nutshell, I suggest that focus on technology as instrumental to negotiation has diverted researchers’ attention from the far deeper and more significant question of whether technology may have fundamentally affected negotiators and negotiation (for expansion on the extent of the “instrumental smokescreen” and its effects on negotiation research with regard to change, see Ebner, 2017a). Let’s tackle that question by identifying change in three key areas of negotiation: Attention, empathy, and trust.

**Negotiator Change**

**Attention**

We’ve discussed the topic of changes in our capacity for attention, above. To demonstrate, reflect: You have now read about a dozen pages in a book chapter. How many times did you interrupt your reading to do something else? Now, try to recollect your capacity for attention 15 years ago, give or take. Were you able to read a dozen pages without interruption? People differ in their capacity for attention, of course, but I think you have likely reflected that, indeed, you used to be able to focus attention on the task of reading in a manner that you are not able to do today.
Lauren Newell (2017) has discussed the issue of negotiator capacity for attention—to focus on one set of stimuli, to the exclusion of others. She explains that attention is important to negotiation, given that

... negotiation is a highly complex endeavor. In any given negotiation, a negotiator may need to listen carefully, evaluate offers, propose options, respond to positions, calculate figures, plan strategies, read contracts, write emails, remember agreements, wait for replies, exercise patience, and soothe tempers, among countless other things. Negotiation makes demands upon negotiators’ cognitive abilities, emotional competencies, and impulse control capabilities—all of which rely upon the negotiators’ powers of attention, particularly their executive attention mechanisms. It stands to reason that a negotiator who cannot pay attention effectively is unlikely to be an effective negotiator. (p. 204)

Focusing on the younger generation of negotiators-in-formation, and relying on research similar to the research on neuroplasticity and cognitive development discussed earlier in the chapter, Newell explains that these professionals are wired for diminished capacity for attention and goes on to discuss how this will detract from their performance as negotiators. She recommends negotiators use technology during specified times to scratch the technological itch we all experience several or many times a day—as this might help them to set their devices aside when they need to focus. She also recommends negotiators consider meditation exercises to improve their capacity to focus.

I concur with Newell’s recommendations and only suggest that they apply to all of us, rather than only those of us beneath a certain age. Interestingly, the notion of attention was never considered to be a core element of negotiation (in terms of research, writing, or teaching)—until people began to change. It was only after a shift in human cognitive capacity was documented in other fields that the effects of its loss were noticed by the negotiation field. The one negotiation experiment carried out with regard to attention in negotiation showed that negotiators who were distracted in the middle of negotiation by receiving a message on their smartphone from a negotiation ally achieved lower gains than negotiators who did not receive messages (Krishnan, Kurtzberg, & Naquin, 2014). It is easy to see how this finding would be read through the instrumental smokescreen as “don’t have your partner text you in the middle of a negotiation” or “turn off your phone before walking into a negotiation,” rather than as being indicative of “Humans are losing capacity for attention, and this will affect negotiation in multiple ways.”

Of course, predilection to attention and focus are partly determined by culture. They are connected indirectly to several cultural dimensions and communicative tendencies and directly to the notion of monochromatic and
Empathy

Empathy has long been considered a core attribute and/or skill of negotiators (Schneider & Ebner, 2017). It is prescribed as a tool for uncovering interests (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011) and advocated for as the key to a constructive atmosphere (Ury, 1991). Empathy is a complex element of negotiation—the literature would have you be able to feel for your counterpart emotionally, understand where they are coming from cognitively (also known as “perspective taking”), and display or receive empathy behaviorally.

It is becoming increasingly clear, over longitudinal measurements, that people’s overall degree of empathy has been in decline (at least among young American adults) for over a decade, and continues to decrease. While it is hard to pinpoint causation for this, it certainly correlates with the increased role of technology and social media in young people’s lives, and it is easy to suggest reasons for why immersion in these might cause reduced empathy (Newell, forthcoming).

It is common to hear a more specific explanation for reduced empathy among young people: videogames. In addition to videogames diminishing the time young people spend interacting with one another, violent videogames, in particular, are often directly blamed for antisocial behavior and violence. For example, after every school shooting in the United States, there is a knee-jerk reaction on behalf of some to point a finger at videogames. While the evidence on the effects of violent videogames has never been clear-cut, recent meta-reviews do conclude that a preponderance of studies indicates that immersion in them may be a cause of reduced empathy (Anderson et al., 2010; Carrier, Spradlin, Bunce, & Rosen, 2015). It should be noted that videogaming is not something to be dismissed as frivolous; given the astounding numbers of people who regularly play videogames all around the world, estimated to be over two billion people (McDonald, 2017; also see McGonigal, 2011), it is not unlikely that one of your next negotiation counterparts, or your own negotiation teammate, partakes in videogaming. It is not unlikely that you do yourself!

Empathy, and empathy decline, certainly have cultural aspects, although empathy was not measured specifically for Hofstede’s (2009) cultural comparisons or for other leading models. However, empathy could certainly be related to femininity and to collectivism; elements of both would tend to
encourage empathy in the form of care and support for others. Changes in empathy levels on a culture-related scale might certainly lead to challenges for cross-cultural negotiation. What might such a change look like?

Just as a hypothetical example, consider South Korea, a feminine culture scoring a 37 on masculinity and a collectivistic culture scoring low, an 18, on individualism (Hofstede Insights, 2018). In addition to those dimensions relation to empathy, as noted above, empathy is a cornerstone of Confucianism, which deeply influences South Korean culture (Buja, 2016). Indeed, a study of 63 countries surveying over 100,000 participants (Chopik et al., 2016) ranked South Korea as the 6th most empathetic country (one place ahead of the United States, for comparison’s sake).

Next, consider that South Korea is also a leader in the field of video-gamers. It is among the most developed in terms of professional e-sports (videogaming leagues comparable to basketball or football/soccer leagues). Over 50% of the population play videogames, and some of the most popular games certainly qualify as “violent videogames” (Pasquier, 2017). Videogame addiction became so ubiquitous in South Korea, that as far back as 2011, minors under 16 were prohibited from playing online games between midnight and 6 am; the government monitors compliance with this rule (Ping, 2017).

One could easily suggest that based on the research on technology use, and on videogaming in particular, we might see shifts in individual South Koreans’ empathic capacity, over time. Looking beyond that, though, might diminishment of empathy be a channel through which the country’s score on the dimensions of masculinity and individualism is altered? All this will have impact on South Koreans’ negotiation style and will also impact those negotiating with South Koreans. Of course, there are many other variables that could negate this; I’m using South Korea as a hypothetical example, owing to the contrast between its current ranking in terms of empathy, the increasing saturation of the country with videogaming, and the research suggesting human change in the area of empathy.

**Trust**

Interparty trust has long been identified as the magical ingredient in negotiation. More than any other element, it is seen as key for everything that this book has spotlighted as contributing to negotiation success. As I’ve written elsewhere (Ebner, 2007):
Trust has been identified as an element playing a key role in enabling cooperation, problem solving, achieving integrative solutions, and dispute resolution. Negotiators are trained and advised to seek out and create opportunities for trust-building whenever possible, and as early as possible in the course of a negotiation process. Trust is considered a vital precondition for sharing information, arousing generosity and empathy, and reciprocating trust-building moves in a negotiation process. When trust in a negotiation opposite is lacking, negotiators fear that information imparted to the other might be used to one’s own detriment. A trust-filled environment might enable negotiators to contemplate the worst outcome of the process as being a mutually agreed upon “no-deal,” which holds promise of a continuing relationship and possible future interactions, dictating cooperative behavior patterns in the negotiation process. Distrust, on the other hand, causes parties to focus on how their cooperative behavior can be used against them by the other to cause them actual loss. This triggers defensive behavior—negotiators withhold information, attack the other’s position and statements, threaten him, and lock themselves into positions from which they cannot easily withdraw. (pp. 141–42, citations omitted)

One mechanism through which trust works is its serving as the bonding agent in relationships. As Jean-Francois Roberge and Roy Lewicki (2012) have put it:

Trust has been described as the “glue” that holds relationships together and enables individuals to perform more efficiently and effectively … We assume trust between parties has an impact on their relationship, and vice versa … As relationship develops, trust changes, and as trust changes, relationship develops. (p. 430, citations omitted)

In fact, a quick word search of this book reveals that the word is used over 280 times, excluding this chapter.

Might trust develop, deteriorate, and function differently, in the new technological era? Traditionally, trust has been understood to be rooted in three sources (Lewicki, 2006):

• Identification (the more you are like me, the more I will trust you);
• Knowledge (the more I know about you, the more I will trust you in certain situations); and,
• Deterrence (the harsher I can punish you for trust infractions, the more I will trust you to avoid them).

Trust is a multitasking element; it not only functions as the relational glue discussed above, it also provides the elusive bit of assurance that facilitates people’s willingness to assume risk and vulnerability (Ebner, 2007).
Given trust’s all-important role in negotiation, it warrants constant investigation. A generation into the technological era, there are many reasons to believe that trust is in flux. Some issues are clear, others are more complex. In the West, there is a consistent decline of public trust in their governments and in public institutions (OECD, 2017). This is particularly marked in the United States, where the percentage of people who say they trust the government all or most of the time has declined from over 70% to under 20% over the past 60 years (Pew Research Center, 2015).

I would not be surprised if data gathered over the next few years for these same measurements of trust show further decline in the public’s trust in institutions and governments. In addition to an ever-widening circle of polarized countries, there is a new tendency to place trust itself under attack. Worried that people might trust certain others, their adversaries prefer to undermine people’s trust altogether—in a sense, eroding the very concept of trust. This phenomenon, best exemplified by the role played by false news reports in the 2016 elections in the United States, the ongoing accusations of “fake news” cast at any news item that does not cast one in the best light, and hints at the existence of a deep state undermining the public’s true wishes, has since spread to other areas of the world.

Another important shift in trust dynamics over the past few years is the shift from trust in institutions, brands, and personal contacts, to trust in strangers providing us advice over the internet and services in the real world. This type of trust, which might be called “peer trust,” is thriving. As Rachel Botsman (2015) described this phenomenon:

Think of the characteristics of “institutional trust”—big, hierarchal, centralized, gated, and standardized. It works if you are Goldman Sachs, AT&T, or Pfizer but it makes no sense if you are network or market-based company like Airbnb, Lyft, or Etsy. The DNA of “peer trust” is built on opposite characteristics—micro, bottom-up, decentralized, flowing and personal. The result of this shift is not only the emergence of disruptive new business models. Convention in how trust is built, lost and repaired—in brands, leaders and entire systems—is being turned upside down.

We are inventing a type of trust that can grease the wheels of business and facilitate person-to-person relationships in the age of distributed networks and collaborative marketplaces. A type of trust that transforms the social glue for ideas whether it be for renting your house to someone you don’t know, making a loan to unknown borrowers on a social lending platform, and getting in a car with a stranger from being considered personally risky, to the building blocks of multi-billion-dollar businesses.
Very much in line with the discussion in this chapter, Botsman (2015) concludes:

Without a doubt this shift in trust will be messy … And we’ll have to find a way through because to be human, to have relationships with other people, is to trust. Perhaps the disruption happening now is not about technology; it is how it enables a shift in trust, from institutions to individuals.

The fact that changes in human tendency to form and place trust are taking place, concurrently, across a broad span of activities—including, for example, restaurant choice, product choosing on online marketplaces, dating, taxi service, and holiday accommodations—is both indicative of the large shift trust is undergoing and is another precipitator of the shift. If I shift from asking a hotel concierge to flag me down a taxi to ordering an Uber, I’ve shifted my trust from a familiar institution and custom (the hotel and the concierge who play the frontal role of obtaining and placing me in a safe ride) to technology (the Uber app) and an individual (the Uber driver). A successful ride will reinforce my own tendency toward this this new type of trust formation and placement (Botsman, 2016). I might also share my experience with others and be a trust multiplier.

The growth of these new types of trust is related to the ever-developing trust that people place in rating systems or reputation sites.

Some aspects of this new trust formation might fit in with traditional conceptualization of trust in terms of identification-based, knowledge-based, and deterrence-based trust. Others may not. It may follow that the changes in the way people develop trust in the age of the “sharing economy” are so fundamental that they necessitate new conceptualization and terminology (see Tanz, 2014).

If such a primary consideration in negotiation is changing, with new factors affecting people’s trust and distrust, the negotiation field must examine the effects of this change on people’s trust-related decisions as negotiators. This need is magnified, when you consider trust in cross-cultural situations.

Trust certainly has cultural aspects. On a national level, the 2014 World Values Survey found that people in different countries have more or less tendency to respond “most people can be trusted” when posed with the question: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people? Under 10% of Brazilians and Columbians agreed with this sentence. Conversely, over 60% of Swedes and Chinese did agree with it (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2017). It is particularly interesting to note changes over time (see https://ourworldindata.org/trust for
a graphic display). This supports both the notion that trust ebbs and flows quantitatively and perhaps qualitatively; it also supports the notion that national tendencies on key issues related to negotiation change over time.

To add in another cultural angle, some research indicates that being raised in households adhering to certain religious traditions (primarily Catholic and Protestant) increases one’s degree of trust by over 2% and that regularly attending religious services increases trust by up to 20% (Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2006). Other religious upbringing might not affect trust significantly at all.

As people change with regard to the way they form their trust assessments of others, and change the actions they take in order to appear trustworthy and actually be trustworthy, cross-cultural exchanges are apt to become more fraught with distrust than they have previously been.

**From Human Change to Negotiator Change to Negotiation Change**

Before moving on to discussing the notion of cultural change and its potential impacts on negotiation, one more point must be made.

So far, I’ve discussed ways in which people have changed and zoomed in on ways in which people have changed that are particularly significant for negotiation. In doing so I’ve laid the foundation for the premise that negotiators have changed.

Going one step further, I’d suggest that these changes might be so significant, as to warrant the conclusion that negotiation itself has changed. In other words, changes in people-as-negotiators—their habits, practices, tendencies, skillsets, and preferences—might be so far reaching as to require reexamination—if not reconceptualization—of everything we know about negotiation. To test this suggestion, choose your favorite model of negotiation, apply the elements of change discussed in this chapter, and see how they affect the model as a whole. I briefly demonstrate this on the most commonly known model of negotiation, offered by Roger Fisher et al. (2011) in their book *Getting to Yes*, by noting elements of change pertaining to each of the four elements of their model:

*Separate the people from the problem:* This taps skills of focus, empathy, and interpersonal communication. We have already noted, at length, how all these are in flux.
Focus on interests, not on positions: This requires negotiators to maintain a particular focus despite distracting information and stimuli the other presents. It requires strong power of attention. It requires excellent communication skills. Deciding to share information about your interests, and encouraging your counterpart to share such information, both require smart trust decision-making as well as skilful trust-building. I’ve discussed the effects of change on each of these areas, above.

Create options for mutual gain: This requires two skills—collaboration and creativity. Creativity is certainly in flux, as a desire quality and as a positive force. Societal progress is being driven by this creativity, which is increasingly gaining recognition as a life skill. In the technological age, we are witnessing an increase in collaborative creativity—the type required for negotiation processes (as opposed to individuals experiencing alone-in-the-bathtub Eureka moments). Collaborative creativity is the force enabling joint knowledge creation by a thousand students in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) or by hundreds of thousands of Wikipedia editors.

Insist on using objective criteria: This requires access to information and methods to present it reliably to your counterpart; both are provided by modern technology. On the other hand, the very nature of “objectivity,” “facts,” and human acceptance of objective facts as persuasive may have changed. Look hard enough, and you will find the internet provides you with support for any position as well as for its counterposition. Lines between opinion and fact blur on the internet, further undermining the persuasiveness of any source. This is compounded by the realization that there are those engaged in deliberately creating false facts, as was spotlighted in the 2016 US elections and in events that followed. Collectively, these changes erode trust in “objective facts,” reducing the chances that you and your counterpart will be able to agree on a set of shared criteria to guide your discussion.

This section has demonstrated that even those few specific areas of change pinpointed in this chapter are significant enough to make that change permeate every element of negotiation models (for an expanded discussion of change as it relates to elements of negotiation models, see Ebner, 2017a).

Culture, Change, and Negotiation

If culture is an element of negotiation, as this book assumes, then changes in culture over time will impact negotiators and negotiation itself. And, as cultures grow more similar or dissimilar across cultural dimensions, cross-cultural interactions will become simpler or more challenging, respectively.
This is a simple suggestion to make. The challenge, however, lies in its underlying premise. Does culture change? This question is one of the most fiercely debated in the study of culture. Or, to be more precise, it seems to be the question of rapid and/or constant change that is debated. It would be silly to suggest that Greek culture today is the same as it was in the days of Athens and Sparta or that Italian culture today is identical to the heyday of the Roman Empire.

The question that seems to be largely under debate is, does culture need to be reexamined periodically, perhaps every few years, in order to assess its stability or transition? If we examine a particular culture today, can we reasonably expect that things will remain largely the same for the next year? Decade? Century?

This last suggestion is not randomly chosen. Hofstede (2009), fiercely defending his model’s stability over time, wrote that “Cultures, especially national cultures, are extremely stable over time” (p. 34). He held that that cultural stability spanned multiple generations and that cultural change occurred at the centennial level, if at all (Hofstede, 2009).

A great many other scholars have argued against this. The World Values Survey indicates cultural changes in many countries over time (for a visualization of such change over time, see World Values Survey (n.d.)), and researchers have noted cultural changes over brief periods of time, particularly after dramatic events or policy shifts (see Zhao, Kwon, & Yang, 2016).

Particularly, it is the very cross-cultural study that contributed so much to our understanding of the topic of cross-cultural negotiation that draws much of the fire: Hofstede’s model of cultural dimensions. Many individual research papers have added their weight to this debate, conducting follow-on replications of Hofstede’s research in different countries and reporting cultural change (e.g., Wu, 2006) or reaffirming Hofstede’s original findings, strengthening the case for cultural stability (e.g., Girlando, Anderson, & Zerillo, 2004).

If there is one thing that stands out as a clear innate theme in all of the chapters in this book—by innate, I mean something that appeared organically, rather than being an issue that the editors requested authors to comment on—it is the topic of change. The changes in cultural areas that the author described were not uniform. Some stressed change in the shape of sharp advances in economic development, others identified change in the balance of traditionalism and modernity, and still others in a shift from Eastern to Western values. Interestingly, several authors noted cultural shifts along particular dimensions of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Globalization, a term indicating a shift from one mindset and operating pattern to another, also came up quite often. Taken together, this leaves the reader with the sense that while
culture is old and embedded, it is not static. Deserts endure for a long time, becoming arable only through natural cataclysmic upheaval or human intervention, yet its sand is in constant motion, dunes rise and disappear, and—with the right type of time-lapse photography—one can witness the entire scene changing.

I hesitate to insert myself in a debate between such titans of the field of culture. However, I note that one way to reconcile Hofstede’s slow-change approach with the more rapid cultural change that some studies have shown and that some chapters in this book have described is by pointing out that in supporting his slow-change approach, Hofstede (2011) looked to the past, rather than the future:

Culture change basic enough to invalidate the country dimension index rankings, or even the relevance of the dimensional model, will need either a much longer period—say, 50 to 100 years—or extremely dramatic outside events. Many differences between national cultures at the end of the twentieth century were already recognizable in the years 1900, 1800 and 1700 if not earlier. There is no reason why they should not play a role until 2100 or beyond. (p. 20)

It may turn out, that the past is not a reliable source for grounding predictions of the future, in the specific area of process pace. The pace of technological advancement is not only faster than ever before in human history, it is also constantly accelerating.

As far back as 1970, Alvin Toffler conceptualized the idea of ‘future shock’, a psychological state characterized as “the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time” (Toffler, 1970, p. 1). This has effects on the individual and the societal level. The pace of change has greatly increased since 1970, increasing the likelihood that we are all experiencing, to some degree, the effects of future shock.

The notion of accelerated change is most apparent in the developmental history of the most basic building block of all twentieth- and twenty-first-century (so far) technology: the computer processing chip. Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel, first observed that the number of transistors on chips were doubling every two years—and predicted that this would continue to do so, with cost staying constant. To the layperson, Moore’s Law explains why our devices constantly become smaller and more powerful while holding at roughly the same price.

While this is all very well for computing power, why is this accelerating pace of development important in a broader sense?
Roy Kurzweil (2001) has explained that Moore’s Law essentially applies to all ongoing, evolutionary, developmental processes—including, but not limited to, all technological development. Kurzweil’s Law of Accelerating Returns predicts that all such processes grow exponentially. As he puts it:

An analysis of the history of technology shows that technological change is exponential, contrary to the common-sense “intuitive linear” view. So, we won’t experience 100 years of progress in the twenty-first century—it will be more like 20,000 years of progress (at today’s rate of progress, that is) … the future will be far more surprising than most observers realize: few have truly internalized the implications of the fact that the rate of change itself is accelerating. (Kurzweil, 2001)

Beyond acceleration of technological change, the pace of technological spread—technology’s dissemination and adaptation in society—is also accelerating; for example, the smartphone has been recognized as the fastest-spreading technology in human history (Ebner, 2014).

If culture is in any way linked to technological development and its spread across society, it stands to reason that cultural shift is also likely to occur more quickly in the twenty-first century than in the twentieth, and to continue to accelerate in the future.

Another way of connecting the issue of societal change with culture change is to note that the impact of human change discussed in the first half of the chapter differs by culture. Different cultures have responded differently to technology and its incorporation in daily life. Even beyond the digital divides dictated by location in the Global North or Global South or by more local wealth gaps, other cultural issues affect the degree of technological immersion a particular culture or subculture has experienced. For example, some would suggest that Japanese culture has more fervently adopted technology than, say, American culture. Now, compare urban Japanese to ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel or Amish Americans, who eschew the use of the internet or of modern technology more generally, respectively. These are extreme examples of course, but they highlight the fact that the wave of technology did not crash upon the shores of all cultures equally; therefore, the degree of the changes we’ve discussed throughout the chapter cannot be expected to distribute equally the world over. Hofstede (2011) takes this point in a slightly different direction:

Some authors predict that new technologies will make societies more and more similar. Technological modernization is an important force toward culture change and it leads to partly similar developments in different societies, but
there is not the slightest proof that it wipes out variety on other dimensions. It may even increase differences, as on the basis of pre-existing value systems societies cope with technological modernization in different ways. (p. 20)

I suggest that this may justify framing and examining new cultural dimensions in order to understand societal and individual behavior. Hofstede (2011) himself opposed to adding additional dimensions, given that

… human minds have a limited capacity for processing information, and therefore dimensional models that are too complex will not be experienced as useful. (p. 21)

Still, given the sweeping effects of technology on every aspect of human life in many places around the world, and the fact that these effects and their degree of their pervasiveness differ from culture to culture, adding a technologically-related dimension to models of cultural dimensions might be inevitable. I can imagine several ways to frame such a dimension; for example, the degree to which people in a society embrace new technologies or the degree to which people expect unlimited and uncensored access to the global information network. Such new dimensions are, on the one hand, more areas to find difference and, on the other, understanding them would help to overcome cross-cultural misperceptions.

Even if the sands of culture shift very slowly, it may be that negotiators are particularly susceptible to being affected by this change, or that they are less likely to be as constrained by the boundaries of their own culture as much as the average citizen is. By nature of their role, many negotiators are likely to travel internationally and to have international contacts. Such experiences lead to personal development; through opening a window in the walls of one’s culture, one achieves enhanced understanding and perspective taking.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Cross-Cultural Negotiation

Considering the rapidly changing negotiator and anticipated changes in negotiation itself, cross-cultural negotiation is likely to become more intricate, and more fascinating, even as it becomes more necessary.

Looking ahead, I envision a world in which a new global negotiation landscape appears. With ICT eliminating geography as a deciding limitation, and supported by further developments in transportation and other fields, international business will increase, and with it, cross-cultural negotiation. Some of the cross-
cultural challenges of negotiation will be simpler than they currently are. For example, negotiators will increasingly be able to speak the same language rather than working through an interpreter or a third language—this owing to English continuing to spread as the global business language, the learning of foreign languages being simplified by software, and advances in real-time translation software. Similarly, advances in the understanding of cross-cultural education—this book among them—will provide the cross-cultural sensitivity that negotiators require.

On the other hand, I expect that certain elements of cross-cultural negotiation will become far more complex—just as we thought we were getting a handle on them.

Applying general cultural dimensions to specific people and interactions with them has always relied on an assumption that, as Israeli poet Saul Tchernichovski has written, “A person is naught but the pattern of their homeland’s landscape.” Of course, as many authors in this book have reminded us, directly applying country-level traits to any particular negotiation counterpart is risky business. Rather, familiarity with national cultural traits will help you know what to look for, what to question, and what to be extra cautious about, as you negotiate.

Looking toward the future, negotiators are increasingly less likely to be only a reflection of their home culture. As internationalization of higher education increases, so too do the odds that your counterpart has had an international component to their education, mixing other cultural ingredients into the mix together with their home culture (Khan & Ebner, 2018). Moreover, they are more likely to have studied the art and science of negotiation, specifically, outside of the cultural approach in their homeland—owing to educational opportunities allowing them to study negotiation in global settings with students around the world. This might be in the course of formal education or through a variety of educational opportunities the internet offers us. For example, in a Massive Open Online course, or MOOC, that I taught several years ago, over 2000 students from 87 different countries around the world signed up to study negotiation—and this was not a particularly large course, by MOOC standards (Ebner, 2016).

As negotiators become less identified with their national culture, the more likely it is that negotiating parties might converge around an interactional mode of conduct that they can both cope with. However, the diminishment of national culture’s effect on negotiation will also cost negotiators some of the paths they had previously used to connect with the other. This is likely to cause more intercultural faux pas than less. To be truly successful in the future, the international negotiator will need not only the cross-cultural sensitivity that this book has endeavored to equip them with but also increased capacity for nuance in taking stock of the cultural make-up of his or her counterpart.
References


