
The Dilemma Of Senator Williams: A Case Study Of Student Decision-Making, Controversy, And Ethical Dilemmas

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Abstract:

The titled “Senator Williams, Do You Vote For or Against on the Diego Resolution before Senate” encourages students to engage in historical empathy and critical inquiry on the possible military intervention in the small hypothetical country of Ersatz. The Diego Resolution asks the Senate to endorse the President’s plan to move a navy task force to a position ten miles off the shore of Ersatz so that to be available quickly if needed. The resolution does not say explicitly what the Navy will do after it is there, only that it would be “ready to take whatever actions are necessary to protect American lives.”

With each document, students receive more pertinent information that presents controversy and ethical dilemmas. Such an investigation encouraged students to confront three fundamental questions:

- 1) When does the United States have the authority or obligation to intervene in another country’s affairs,*
- 2) When, if ever, should the President have the power to use military force without Congressional approval, and*
- 3) When, if ever, does the value of American lives outweigh the risk and reward of foreign policy or diplomacy?*

The research involved four questionnaires on the Case Study’s four scenarios in evaluating the effectiveness of its development of the students’ knowledge and understanding of the Diego resolution and the related historical empathy and skills of historical enquiry. The research data indicated that the students progressed in the following areas:

- 1) better understand complicated issues, historical events, and content material;*
- 2) discuss issues with their peers;*
- 3) engage in informative discussion and debate related information presented;*
- 4) become active agents in the learning process;*
- 5) develop solutions to historical problems; and*
- 6) decipher causes of events.*

Key Words:

Clues Analysis, Case Study, Compromise, Conflict, Decision-Making, Empathy, Political Pressure, Resolution, Role-play, Simulation, USA

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Introduction

In today's history classroom, the use of case studies and decision-making is one of the several strategies that teachers may use to promote differentiation to increase student interest.

Through the case study method, students can search for evidence and clues to analyze while evaluating documents, stories or accounts that improve motivation, knowledge retention, and historical understanding (Weinland, 2012; Pope, et.al, 2010). As former high school history teachers, we found the development and differentiation of pedagogical strategies beneficial to our students. While students collectively appreciate lessons beyond the direct instruction and rote memorization, year after year, students found the comprehension of Cold War events and political movements both vague and confusing. Such a phenomena are especially noticeable when teaching about political developments that led to United States involvement in military conflicts, geopolitical interventions and other U.S. domestic and global policies. Furthermore, most students cannot accurately identify when a military campaign started, what political intervention took place, what nations participated, and the level of presidential and Congressional involvement.

However, rather than lecture, we wanted students to be actively involved with a sense of historical empathy as they became involved with the curriculum via role play and simulation. Through engagement with a case study, students engaged in a fictional scenario where students portrayed an influential U.S. Senator, who is forced to cast a deciding vote on a war resolution. By examining four documents [handouts] that provide critical information for a decision before the Senate, students must decide the perceived importance of American interest and national security in a hypothetical foreign country.

The facilitation of active learning and decision-making by using case study methodology is not new and is used extensively across the Social Sciences and Humanities, including History. Initially considering the legacy of Dr. Hangdell in the 1870s, the idea of students learning through practical engagements via activities and discussion took flight during the 1960s (McDonnel, 2002; Gibbs, 2009). The use of case studies enabled students to understand and react to impromptu decisions and value dilemmas which may have short or long-term outcomes (Byford & Russell, 2006; Chapin, 2003; Pearl, 2000; Wolfer & Baker, 2000). Case studies range from one to multiple documents. In almost all cases, case studies rely on student interaction where students are encouraged to discuss, analyze and clarify their opinions on historically related events. The usage of historical 'fiction' rather than actual events also helps mitigate potential 'blowback' from discussion controversial issues in the first place. By putting the scenario in a hypothetical concept, though using real life situations or contexts, helps the instructor develop the same levels of controversy and critical thinking while minimizing stressors that can hinder the learning process (Lennon, 2107). Students have the opportunity to:

- 1) better understand complicated issues, historical events, and content material;
- 2) discuss issues with their peers;
- 3) engage in informative discussion and debate related information presented;
- 4) become active agents in the learning process;
- 5) develop solutions to historical problems; and
- 6) decipher causes of events (Kunselman & Johnson, 2004; Byford, 2013).

As with almost any lesson, the case study and materials vary in page length, content materials, and level of student interaction. Case studies are often considered dependent on class discussions and clarifying and justifying their opinions. Depending on the desired outcome, the teacher's role is often limited. Within the student discovery phase, there are two applications of delivery: the open-ended and closed-ended approaches. The open-ended occurs when the outcome is not pre-determined, allowing students to investigate issues, conflicts, outcomes and consequences based on their interpretations and decisions (Soley, 1996). In direct contrast, the closed-ended approach follows the assumption the teacher has pre-determined the knowledge, structures, or

conclusions that students will discover through varying degrees of subtlety.

In addition to the perceived benefits associated with case studies, the involvement of historical empathy is often achieved through the analysis and discussion of documents. Gehlbach (2004) illustrated the positive correlation between the ability for students to take another perspective and resolution skills. Furthermore, Barton and Levstik (2004) argued the development of historical empathy provide and prepares students for a pluralistic society. Allowing students to deliberate, analyze, and recognize other individual's values, beliefs, attitudes and motivations different from their own has potential merit. Barton and Levstik (2004) write that 'if students are going to take part in the meaningful discussion, they need to understand differing perspectives are a normal part of social interaction, not an aberration to be suppressed or overcome (p.216). Likewise, Boddington (1980) indicates one possible misconception of historical empathy associated with the cognitive skills of the student. Empathy is a complex blend of thinking and feeling, and the mere notion of compassion itself cannot be achieved without the positive attitude and cognitive skills required to understand other points of view. In fact, historical empathy lies at the core of the case study method. To practice empathy both cognitively and affectively, students should have the ability to:

- 1) project their thoughts and feelings into a historical situation;
- 2) distinguish the historical period from their own;
- 3) utilize reference materials or sources;
- 4) present the person or situation to illustrate the circumstances of the case or dilemmas; and
- 5) can be cognitive of the misunderstanding, conflict or tragedy (Portal, 1987 & Yilmaz, 2007).

Historical Background of the High School Curriculum Center in Government

Developed in partnership with the Department of Political Science and the School of Education at Indiana University, the High School Curriculum Center in Government Project designed and developed materials for civics and American government courses. The program's directors, John Patrick, and Howard Mehlinger believed a weakness existed in civics programs and new concepts and inquiry about social phenomena would provide an alternative towards traditional rote memorization. Considered economically feasible in the late 1960s, the classroom curriculum *American Political Behavior* consisted of a one-year course providing students with content dealing with: 1) the Study of Political Behavior, 2) Similarities and Differences in Political Behavior, 3) Elections and Voting Behavior, 4) Political Decision-Makers, and 5) Unofficial Political Specialist (Haley, 1972).

The developers believed traditional materials used at the time failed to take advantage of new pedagogical strategies developed in the 1960s. Traditional curriculum failed to discuss controversial issues; overemphasized the legalistic structure of government at the hand of the political process; failed to build on political knowledge, beliefs, and values that most students already have. Patrick and Mehlinger believed by focusing on the relationships between socio-economic status, role, culture, and socialization; students can analyze and comprehend political phenomena. In doing so, the objectives established for *American Political Behavior* was to: develop students' abilities to select, organize, analyze and interpret information, utilize concepts and make generalizations about political behavior and activities; increasing the capability of developing or selecting political alternatives; making value judgements; and reinforcing democratic principles and political beliefs (Haley, 1972).

The titled "Senator Williams, Do You Vote For or Against on the Diego Resolution of the Senate" was found in Unit 4, *Political Decision-Makers*. Unit 4 focuses on the political roles of the

president, members of Congress, judges, bureaucrats along with the unofficial political specialists that focus on political influentials outside of the formal government structure. Materials in Unit 4 were designed to prepare students to organize data and apply analytical skills via the case study and simulation approach. In the related to Senator Williams, students examine, speculate, and incorporate values-judgement to resolve a resolution before the Senate to protect American citizens and U.S. interests in the fictional country of Ersatz.

Student participation in the Case Study is as follows [Appendix A]:

The date is June 3, 1982. You are a first-term senator. As a junior senator, you find yourself on several high-ranking committees. Fellow senators from both political parties think you are honest, trustworthy, and committed to the security of the United States. Over the past month, tensions have grown in the tiny island of Ersatz (see figure 1). Recently, revolutionaries have in a friendly way gained significant portions of the country. To increase tension, the revolutionaries have kidnaped Americans and foreigners as hostages. The President believes with the passage of the Diego Resolution; it will give him the freedom he needs to deal with the current uprising in Ersatz. As a senator, you receive five documents. Each report deals with a unique aspect of the unfolding events and provides valuable information to help you decide if you will ultimately vote for or against the Resolution before the Senate.

With each document, students receive more pertinent information that presents controversy and ethical dilemmas. In this particular, the teacher used four steps to introduce students to a designated issue, to foster discussion, and to promote inquiry while providing reinforcement through a teacher-led classroom discussion (Appendix B).

- o The first step: *The Introduction* establishes the in the context of social and political events that lend themselves to conflict.
- o The second step: *The Learning Experience* allows students to examine documents sequentially while asking critical questions about each document's validity and purpose (Appendix C).
- o The third step: *Comprehension Development* requires students to discuss the merits and facts of each document.
- o Lastly, the fourth step: *Reinforcement and Extension* based on the merits found embedded within each document followed by a teacher-led discussion (Byford, 2013).

Aim and Purpose of a Political

This was designed to investigate fictional events where rebels have taken American hostages, equipment, and significant portions of the country of Ersatz. Students analyze and evaluate four following documents [handouts] that build upon each other to provide information outlining the social and political difficulties associated with foreign affairs and international conflict. Such an investigation encouraged students to confront three fundamental questions:

- 1) When does the United States have the authority or obligation to intervene in another country's affairs,
- 2) When, if ever, should the President have the power to use military force without Congressional approval, and
- 3) When, if ever, does the value of American lives outweigh the risk and reward of foreign policy or diplomacy?



Fig. 1. The Island Nation of Ersatz

A lesson like Senator Williams provides an opportunity for substantive, high-level thinking when teaching about political activity that requires value analysis about a policy decision framed within an empirical context such as the Cold War or other events associated with social studies classrooms.

Research Methodology: Sample Selection and Method

At the time of the activity, 173 students were enrolled in seven United States history classes in a private suburban high school in a large southeastern city. Eventually, 160 students completed the activity, providing a 92% return rate. Based on the authors' proximity to campus, the knowledge of the schools academic setting, and experience working with the department's history teachers, two teachers were purposely selected to participate. This target population fits the sample frame designated for high school students enrolled in a social studies course albeit through a purposeful sampling design (Creswell, 2008 & Groves et.al, 2004). Students

were given the lesson titled 'The Dilemma of Senator Williams' while discussing social and international events which created paradoxes in the United States foreign policy. In a single classroom setting, students considered the possible actions of rebels and the potential consequences of human life if the United States intervened through the series of the Case Study's four scenarios with a similar Likert question. This lesson was neither formative or summative in nature. This activity was conducted and completed in one 60 minute classroom setting.

The survey instrument was simple, utilizing multiple scale designs. Each questionnaire had four questions, with three being the same for all four scenarios. Question one was a standard five-point Likert scale of agreement, with five being highly agreed to one highly disagreeing. Number three was neutral or undecided. All four scenarios had questions structured similarly in nature. The Likert scale questions were designed to be categorical, using simple numeration more accurate towards labels which have no defining measurements or dimensions (Howell, 2004). The intent for students to 'define' a choice which by, in itself, would have no numerical value over any other option; except for percentages of response. Each potential answer to a question with the scale used alphabetic order (a, b, c, d, and e) instead of official numbers to help establish impartiality. The second question was nominal in nature and changed for each of the four scenarios; asking students what account or scenario was of importance in their decision-making.

The third issue consisted of a two-point scale inquiring if students would vote yes or no, to the resolution. The last issue consisted of a seven-point Thurstone scale asking students the level of difficulty in making the decision, in issue three. Each Thurstone scale had a one (1) labeled 'extremely easy' and a seven (7) labeled 'impossible'; with the corresponding numbers in between left blank and up to the student to decide. Such a scale helped establish a similar or corresponding data set to that of the Bogardus social distance scale, a statistically useful measurement technique for measuring students choices and opinions (Creswell, 2008). The scale was similar for all four surveys.

Since the questions were of different enumeration as determined by the various scales used; questions one and four are intervals with question two representing nominal and question three ordinal, it was determined only percentages would be used for questions one and three with questions two and four also using percentages as well as mean and standard deviation (Creswell, 2008, Howell, 2004 & Babbie, 2002). The comparison was made by gender. As each new layer of information was developed the responses were compared for differences

Findings and Discussion: Scenario One

Once scenario one was introduced students' response whether the President should intervene without Congressional support saw nearly half of the female students selected 'disagree' (See Table 1) followed by 20 'agree' or 'strongly agree' (19%) and 27 (25%) undecided, skewing the mean to a 2.56, between 'disagree' and 'not sure'(See Table 1). Nine students selected 'strongly disagree' illustrating a dispersal of choices, correlated by a standard deviation of 0.974. For males the dispersal was greater, having a standard deviation of 1.02, with no plurality of decision or choice discernible in their responses. Thirty-five percent of male students indicated no intervention was required, followed by 32% strongly agreeing on presidential intervention.

When asked which event or scenario was most relevant to their rational for question one. Students selected from the following options;

- (1) the kidnapping of American and foreign hostages,
- (2) past presidential abuses of power,
- (3) military intervention to rescue hostages,
- (4) possible Russian or Chinese intervention,
- (5) or an open 'other.'

Response 1 had the highest votes tallied for both males and females with 38 (36%) for the girls and 27 (50%) for the boys. The girls had significant differences in response for 3 with 24 votes (23%) and 4 with 23 (22%). Though the kidnapping was important for a majority, military and other country's intervention also had an impact on this sample group (45%). Males indicated 13 (24%) responses for Russia and China (4), while only 6 (11%) for military intervention (3).

TABLE 1. Responses for Question one, do you support the President intervening without Congressional support?

		Males				Females			
		Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
1	Strongly Agree (A)	3 (6%)	4 (8%)	10 (19%)	16 (30%)	4 (4%)	7 (7%)	12 (13%)	21 (20%)
2	Agree (B)	17 (32%)	11 (20%)	25 (46%)	13 (24%)	16 (15%)	21 (20%)	35 (33%)	30 (28%)
3	Neutral / Don't know (C)	13 (24%)	12 (22%)	8 (15%)	11 (20%)	27 (25%)	26 (25%)	31 (29%)	31 (29%)
4	Disagree (D)	19 (35%)	21 (39%)	8 (15%)	11 (20%)	50 (47%)	45 (42%)	24 (22%)	20 (19%)
5	Strongly Disagree (E)	2 (4%)	6 (11%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	9 (8%)	7 (7%)	4 (5%)	4 (4%)
Mean		3.00	3.00	3.57	3.51	2.56	2.75	3.23	3.39
Diff. Between males and females (Mean)		0.44 ←							→ 0.44
			0.25 ←						→ 0.25
				0.34 ←					→ 0.34
					0.12 ←				→ 0.12

Question three asked students if they would, based on the provided information, vote for or against the Diego Resolution. The vote split among gender with 61 (58%) of female students indicated 'yes' while male students, 29 (55%) failed to support the resolution (See Table 2). When asked the difficulty in making their decision via the seven-point Thurstone scale, females responded lower in scale than the males, indicating female students viewed the situation and similar decisions easier with a mean of 4.09 as compared to the males at 4.45. Both male and female students showed medium sized clusters of responses indicated by their standard deviations.

Scenario Two

When asked 'do you believe the President should intervene without Congressional support' females responded with seven students (7%) strongly agreeing, 21 (20%) agreeing, 26 (25%) unsure or neutral, 45 (42%) for disagreeing and seven (7%) for strongly disagreeing. The mean response was a 2.75 with a standard deviation of 1.05, placing females still in the overall disagree range. Compared to the first scenario, only 19% were in agreement as compared to the 27% in agreement with presidential action now. The neutral category remained conceptually the same, potentially illustrating a shift in perceptions or apprehension.

TABLE 2. Would you vote yes or no on the resolution?

		Males				Females			
		Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
1	Yes	24 (44%)*	27 (50%)	11 (20%)	14 (26%)	61 (58%)	57 (53%)	28 (27%)	28 (26%)
2	No	29 (54%)*	27 (50%)	43 (80%)	40 (74%)	45 (42%)	49 (46%)	77 (73%)	78 (74%)

* One male did not answer this question

Males responded with four (8%) strongly agreeing, 11 (20%) agreeing, 12 (22%) as neutral or unsure, 21 (39%) as disagreeing, and six (11%) as strongly disagreeing. The mean response to this question was a 3.00 with the standard deviation of 1.02. Unlike the female students, male students moved further into the disagreement categories, opposite in the direction of their female counterparts. In the first scenario, 38% of the males voted for the President acting alone with 39% against involvement. By scenario two, only 28% were in favor with 50% against involvement. The neutral category shifted by less than one vote and surprisingly, developing a rather impressive dispersal for this question. The males were minimally in favor as defined by the highest votes allocated, by percentages, there was no valid agreement.

With additional information provided from the first scenario, students were again asked what particular event was the deciding factor in voting for or against the Diego Resolution. Choices consisted of,

- (1) that no American lives were lost,
- (2) there is no risk of war,
- (3) American honor/reputation is preserved,
- (4) The President is supported or,
- (5) the open 'other,' which offered no other defining statements.

The females responded indicated areas of consideration were (41%) that lives were not lost, (39%) there was little to no risk of war, (13%) for American honor, (3%) for Presidential support and (5%) for the open 'other.' The females were, for the most part, evenly decided that no American lives being lost and no risk of war be the most significant reasons for their earlier choices. Similar to females, male students were in ample majority for answers one and two, no lives lost and no risk of war, albeit slightly higher in the majority of 85% of votes tallied.

Interestingly, when it comes to the next question, 'are you for the resolution?', Males were in similar disagreement with 27 votes for and 27 against, equating an even divided among the sample population. Likewise, females were in favor with 57 voting yes (54%) to 49 (46%) against with a difference in four votes between the two scenarios.

Differences in the difficulty towards answering this question as asked by prompt four were also identical between scenario one and two, as the males had a mean response of 4.09, equal to their previous answer, while the females responded with a 4.47. As in scenario one, students found the question difficult to answer. Differences recorded after the second scenario showed a slight movement of male students voting 'no' on question one with the females, moving slightly, towards a 'yes' in allowing the President to act without congressional support. Genders were also different towards the acceptance or rejection of the resolution as males shifted slightly towards yes, creating a deadlock while the females move ever so slightly towards 'no.' Overall, there were negligible differences between responses for both genders between scenario one and two.

Scenario three

The third scenario provides students with additional information which resulted in a significant shift for boys. In scenario three, 35 males responded as either 'strongly agrees' or 'agree' with 65% of the total vote, a sizeable difference, and the first recorded majority agreement. Only 11 students selected 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' (21%) with eight (15%) either neutral or uncertain. Findings represented a significant difference and shifted in the perception of Presidential power. Females also recorded significant changes voting for Presidential support with a plurality listing either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with 46% of the votes. Responses illustrated an increase in the neutral category, up five votes for a total of 29%, second only to 'agree,' indicating possible confusion or reticence in voting yes. However, there were only 28 votes in the two dissenting categories for 27% of the sample group, providing a significant reduction from the first two scenarios.

Question two offered the following events that may have had the most influence in the previous decision. Options here were, (1) the possible location of American hostages, (2) Erzats troops may not be able to free hostages without a compromise, (3) possible American military action, (4) possible execution of American hostages, and (5) open 'other.' The females were somewhat split in their responses as 37 (35%) saw the killing of hostages as most significant while 31 (29%) seemed to think the location of the hostages as most pertinent. The next choice was far less common with only 15 votes (14%) for military action, followed by 14 (13%) of a compromise and nine (8%) for open 'other.' For the males, 26 (48%) saw the execution of the hostages as the most influential variable by a significant margin than the other choices. The next, with 17 votes (32%) was the possible location of the hostages followed distantly with only six votes (11%) for possible American military action. Compromise and 'other' only received four votes apiece (7%) for less than 14% or the sample population. Both genders saw the location and possible execution of the hostages as most significant in their decision making though the females were more divided across the spectrum of choices.

For voting on the resolution (question three) the males and females, for the first time were in general agreement with 43 (80%) of males voting no compared to 77 (73%) of females. Though the males had voted continuously not to support the resolution throughout the previous scenarios, scenario three represented their most concise or tally in this category. For the females, scenario three described was the first definitive reluctance to support the resolution by 28 votes or 28%. For women students, the difference was still minimal, having a mean of 4.17, compared to scenarios two (4.47) and one (4.45). Males found this question easier with an illustrated mean response of 3.35, a significant dip from scenarios two and one (4.09) which recorded similar mean scores.

The standard deviation for both remained high, however, as both populations were a point and a half (1.5) indicating a relatively wide dispersal of question difficulty.

Scenario four

In the fourth and final scenario, responses from both groups headed in opposing directions as the females increased general support while males remained consistent in their hawkish stance. Females answered with 21 (20%) votes for strongly agree, 30 (28%) towards agreeing, 31 (29%) in the neutral or unsure category, 20 (19%) in disagreeing with only four (4%) in the strongly disagree range. A total of 41 votes or 48% of the sample in the agree on the range which is the plurality and slightly more so than the previous vote of 46% agreement. Male students tallied 16 (30%) votes in the strongly agree category, 13 (24%) for having agreed, 11 (20%) in neutral, 11 (20%) in disagreeing and only three (6%) for strongly disagree. Findings total 19 votes for 54% of the population, still a majority but significantly less than the 65% polled in scenario three. Both groups are still for Presidential action without Congressional support. Interestingly the mean scores for males for all four scenarios (3.00-3.00 – 3.57-3.51), within the third choice or category as described as 'unsure/don't know.' As the scenarios moved forward, the means increased, becoming more ensconced. For female students recorded means indicated a slightly different trajectory. Initial responses were in between 'disagreement' and 'neutral/don't know' (2.56-2.75 – 3.23-3.39) only to move firmly into the 'neutral/don't know' range by the end. They also had a stronger response tally in the 'don't know' category from the beginning, ranging from 25% to nearly 30%, or a fifth to almost one-third of possible votes tallied. The students, as a population, found these questions and the scenarios they were based on to be difficult to answer.

Question two the events or scenarios students selected from (1) most Americans favored taking action to save the hostages, (2) a political party that seemed to lack the courage would risk losing votes in the next election, (3) financial or political support in return for Presidential support, (4) the murder of Mr. Fletcher, and (5) open 'other'. For both males and females, the murder of Mr. Fletcher was the most significant choice, as the males garnered 32 responses (59%) to the girls' 57 (54%). Their second choice was also similar in votes tallied with 'other' seeing 11 responses for the males (20%) and 21 (20%) for the females. Only 10% of the males chose based on concerning Americans favor action and 6% each for a political party losing votes and financial support. Female students, however, provided a strong response for taking action with 21 votes tallied for 20% of their population. However, for answers two and three, political parties and favors only 3% and 4% respectively voted for such actions. In general, only the murder of Mr. Fletcher seemed to unify the genders, indicating a lack of certainty in answering the reason for making such a decision. This may suggest confusion or possibly critical thinking struggles as the students tried to clarify their emotions to thoughts as scenarios unfolded.

In the voting for or against the Diego resolution, both genders indicated their lack of support. As the exclusive information unfolded, males stayed resolute. In the first scenario, 54% voted no, with the second scenario illustrating a split opinion. As scenario three provided additional information, a majority, 80%, voted no, followed by 74% in the last question. Though not in favor, the males were, by no means, solidly so throughout the different situations. Females were for the resolution in scenario one and two (58%-53%). Scenarios three and four indicated females had switched answers tallying 73% and 74%.

As for the difficulty in answering this question, the females stayed consistently within the four range with a mean response of 4.04 though this figure also illustrates a small but regular drop in difficulty throughout the scenarios (4.45-4.47 – 4.09-4.04). However, when unified as a population and resoundingly against the resolution, their low response dropped ever so slightly. The standard

deviation for the last scenario was still relatively high, however (1.57) indicating that the cluster was not any more compact than the previous situations. The male students reported the decision process was easier than their counterparts but remained static until scenario three when a significant plunge in difficulty was recorded. Overall males registered less trouble answering and in the decision-making process.

Conclusion

The Dilemma for Senator Williams is an interesting example of how new, and pertinent information can drive new, possibly even critical and empathetic thinking in students. What is interesting in the data collected here is the difference between males and females overall perception towards the situation and how, as the story unfolds, this difference becomes increasingly smaller regarding the means in their response. For the males answering whether they were for the Diego resolution, many were undecided in the first two iterations of the storyline, measuring a mean answer of 3.00 for both scenarios. This 'halfway' in determination represents the category of unsure' and 'don't know' with 20 in the 'yes' columns and 21 in the no (in scenario 1). By the second situation, approval dropped to 15 in the agreement while 27 were unsure; leaving the same mean in response. However, by scenario three, the males were solidly in agreement with over 65% voting respectively to 54% in the 4th scenario. Overall – the males never left the uncertainty and gradually moved up the spectrum by nearly 0.37 of a point at its zenith.

In comparison, the females began in the no category, for both scenarios one and two with 55% to 49% respectively. While scenario two illustrated the second least difference in the four different actions – it was scenarios one and three which indicated the significant differences. By four both genders were almost in agreement with only a 0.12% between their means. The females, unlike the male students, moved consistently from no support to undecided to favor of the resolution in a clear linear fashion, with means of 2.56 (disagree), 2.75 (disagree), 3.23 (not sure/undecided) and 3.39 (not sure/undecided). Female students never wavered and were more consistent in rating the difficulties of their decisions, unlike their male peers. The female students netted a rise of 0.44, slighter higher than their male counterparts.

These differences in rankings are seen as relatively significant as the students, individually and as a group modified their decisions based on new information and subsequently indicated so in their responses. Each scenario 'added a layer' of information compounding the issue of the hostages and asking students how they would respond, developing a linked data set to their differences and potential thinking of their responses. Such findings cannot be overstated as the differences perceived might be distinct in-group or in classroom discussions. The dialogic discourse, albeit in discrete form towards the activity only or in discussing the differences in responses as well, are conduits to critical and empathetic learning (Lennon, 2017).

Teacher-led, student dialogues are powerful tools for engaging students in a broad and varied range of conceptual thinking exercises, and this activity is no exception. As the instructor moves the students from one scenario to the next, each with the overlapping degrees of new information, the teacher can refrain or engage the students during each segment, to elicit discussions or dialogues pertinent to their concerns or views. Using student differences in answering, without identifying the student, but by showing the class the numbers or percentages, can be an easy prompt for those willing to talk about their decision-making processes. This activity style has been utilized effectively in other scenario types, especially with ethics such as the trolley dilemma, allowing for complex thinking while avoiding controversial issues as the scenarios are abstract and not grounded in real world subjects or issues (Lennon, Byford & Cox, 2015).

With proper prompting as well as functioning as an 'outlet' to prevent hostility or frustration, the instructor can use the scenario to help guide students through levels of thinking beyond mere rote memorization while avoiding common pitfalls of controversial issues or other discussions that generate hostility. By doing this, the teacher develops a twofold objective; promoting dialogic discourse invaluable for students in hearing contrarian views and understanding that their peers may be different but that okay, and to allow these same students to critically rationalize what is not an easy, or possibly even a solvable problem (Lennon, 2017). If anything, an issue of complexity where there are no simple fixes or easy answers. Both of these activities allow for students to learn from each other, peer influences as well as the teacher in developing higher functioning skills so necessary for a functioning democracy.

High school students today were born after the end of the Cold War. While the United States may no longer have a defined enemy in the former Soviet Union, global tension nations remain high among regions and nationalities. Students often fail to understand the social and political networks that abide within the United States Congress and the President. To expose students to the perceived realities of statesmanship and foreign diplomacy, students were exposed to a simulated case study involving, foreign governments, American lives, and global and domestic economic interests. This time-tested moral dilemma allows students to analyze, evaluate and decide the final vote on the fictional Diego Resolution. This lesson provides students with creative insight into the functions of government, political party alignment, and American domestic and geopolitical interests not commonly found in today's social studies curriculum.

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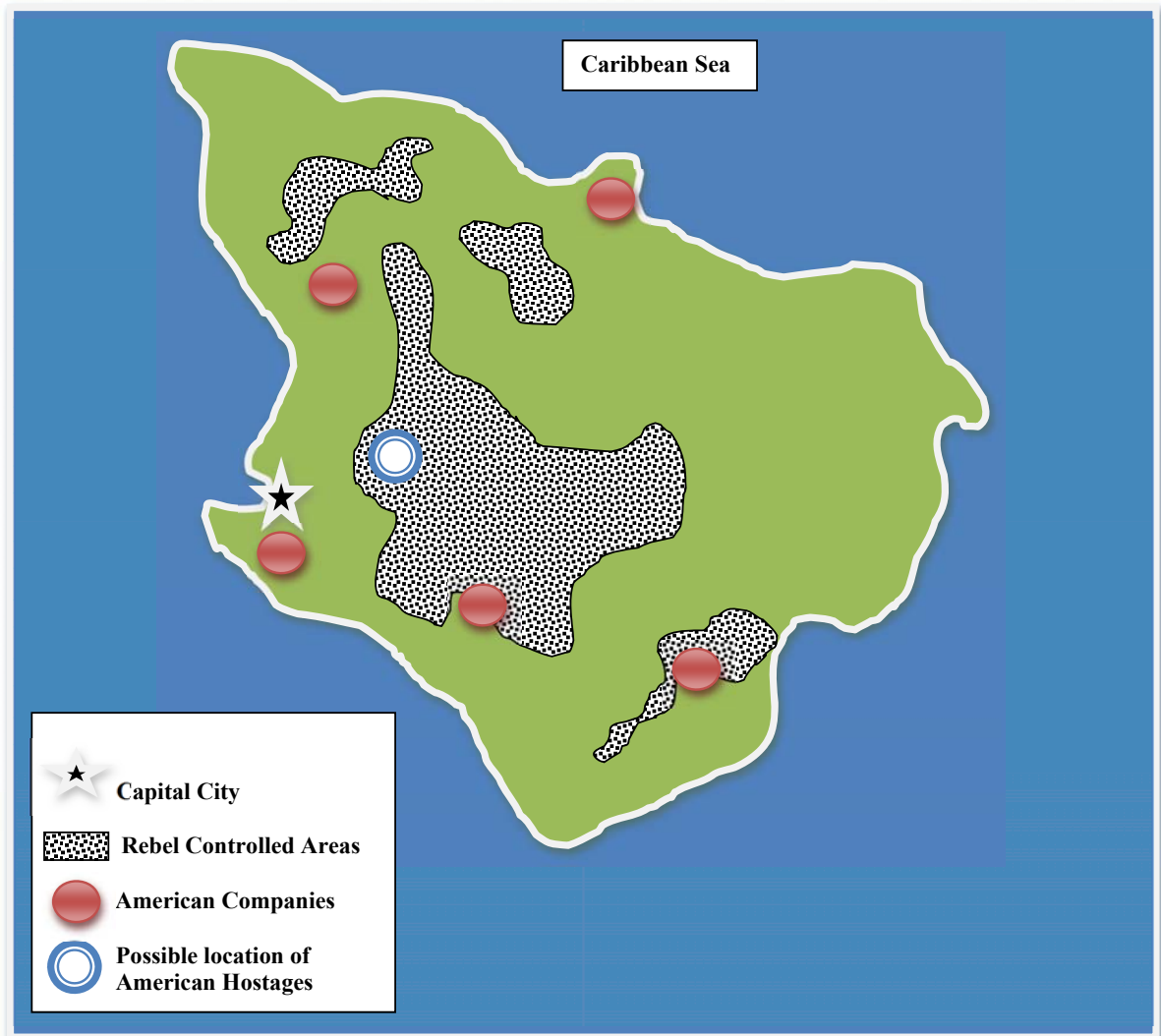


Fig. 1. The Island Nation of Ersatz

For the Student (Appendix A)

The date is June 3, 1982. You are a first-term senator. As a junior senator, you find yourself on several high-ranking committees. Fellow senators from both political parties think you are honest, trustworthy, and committed to the security of the United States. Over the past month, tensions have grown in the tiny island of Ersatz. Recently, revolutionaries have in a friendly way gained significant portions of the country (see figure 1). To increase tension, the revolutionaries have kidnaped Americans and foreigners as hostages. The President believes with the passage of the Diego Resolution; it will give him the freedom he needs to deal with the current uprising in Ersatz. As a senator, you receive five documents. Each report deals with a unique aspect of the unfolding events and provides valuable information to help you decide if you will ultimately vote for or against the Resolution before the Senate.

Procedure and Preparation for the Teacher (Appendix B)

For the Teacher

Teaching about social and political developments and decision-making during the Cold War, especially activities regarding possible American military intervention might be difficult for some students to understand. This fictional provides the teacher with a lesson that 1) helps students speculate or hypothesize based on the sequential events, 2) provides students with the opportunity to test their hypothesis based on documents provided, 3) promotes student application of information and ideas presented in documents, and 4) requires students to construct a value judgement based on their findings. Additionally, this lesson helps to increase cooperative skills and critical inquiry by using a subsequent case study. To help guide students, please use the steps are below.

Step One: Introduction

Set the in the context, and then considered and focus on students while establishing a purpose: To prepared the students are told the year is 1982. Each student is a new Senator, who is well received by both political parties. Recently, the tiny island nation of Ersatz has come under attack from revolutionaries friendly to the Soviet Union and China. To increase hostility, the revolutionaries have taken Western hostages. The President needs your support to pass the Diego Resolution. The President believes the passage of the resolution will allow him the ability to deal with the uprising. As senators, it is your responsibility to read each document, discuss its merits and vote either for or against the Diego Resolution.

Step Two: Learning Experience Distributed

Students examine the evidence individually or in small groups with fundamental questions being posed, active participation with students explaining and analyzing information: Explain there is a total of four documents for analysis. Each report deals with unique and culminating events with potential national and international implications. Indicate to the class; they have a total of ____ minutes to analyze, evaluate, discuss and vote based on information found in each document.

Step Three: Comprehension Development

Students synthesize and evaluate the information with a discussion between students and teacher: Provide students with the Island of Ersatz (Appendix B) and document 1. Instruct students to imagine they are the last and deciding vote needed to pass the Diego Resolution. After a total of ____ minutes, conduct a class discussion and record student decisions to vote for or against the Diego Resolution. After each class vote, encourage a brief class discussion on the events, or lack of information that may have influenced their decision-making process. The teacher might ask what the merits for or against voting for the Diego Resolution based on the information provided? Continue this process for documents 2 through 4. Check for understanding and differing opinions after additional information is acquired.

Step Four: Reinforcement and Extension

Students transfer the learning to the topic in general with teacher-led discussion: Instruct students to decide their final vote for or against the Diego Resolution after the last handout is provided. Survey students to see if any changed their votes while examining the handouts. In addition, students should consider the following questions: 1) When does the United States have the authority or obligation to intervene in another country's affairs, 2) When, if ever, should the President have the power to use military force without Congressional approval, 3) When, if ever, does the value of American lives outweigh the risk and reward of foreign policy or diplomacy, and 4) What criteria did one use in evaluating the importance and worth of each handout?

Student Documents - Handouts (Appendix C)

“SENATOR WILLIAMS, DO YOU VOTE AYE OR NAY ON THE RESOLUTION BEFORE THE SENATE?”

(Handout #1)

“What? I am sorry, dear. I did not hear what you said,” Senator Mark Williams apologized as he became aware that his wife was speaking to him. “Excuse me; what were you saying?”

“I said: How did you intend to vote on the Diego Resolution? I assume that is what is on your mind; that is why you rolled and tossed about the bed all night, mumbling in your sleep.”

“I do not know,” he replied. “The situation in Ersatz seems certain to get worse before it improves. The Ersatz government acts as though it is paralyzed; it has lost control of the capital city. In the meantime, the revolutionaries continue to kidnap Americans and other foreigners and to hold them as hostages. I am afraid that many of the hostages will be killed unless the Ersatz government gives in to the rebels. However, would the hostages be any safer then? I do not trust the rebels or the government. We have helped that corrupt government so long that it expects us to come to the rescue in every one of its crisis – but at least we can work with it. If the revolutionaries win, they will probably seek friendly ties with Russia or China; Americans will be driven out, and American-owned properties in Ersatz will be taken by the revolutionaries with no compensation to the companies.”

A newscaster describes the situation. Senator Williams rose up from his chair and turned on the morning television news in time to hear the news announcer say:

“However, the President believes that if the Senate passes the Diego Resolution, it will give him the freedom he needs to deal with the current uprising in Ersatz.”

“Very simply the Diego Resolution asks the Senate to endorse the President’s plan to move a navy task force to a position ten miles off the shore of Ersatz so that to be available quickly if needed. The resolution does not say specifically what the Navy will do after it is there, only that it would be “ready to take whatever actions are necessary to protect American live.” Some sources believe that the Navy is already on its way to Ersatz. It is unclear this morning how the vote scheduled for 12 noon will be decided.

“Many in the Senate fear that if they approve the resolution, the President will take that as a green light to invade Ersatz, and the United States may find itself involved in a local war that might continue for months or even years. They remember some years ago when President Lyndon Johnson interpreted the Tonkin Resolution as a vote in support of policies to widen the war in Vietnam. These Senators are cautious about giving such a blanket endorsement again because they feel the President abused power and made many decisions that should have been made by Congress.

These Senators also argue that there be many measures the American government can take to ensure the safety of Americans in Ersatz without giving the President the power called for in the Diego Resolution. On the other hand, Senators favoring the resolution argue that the President need a vote of support to strengthen his hand in dealing with a very delicate problem: how to protect the lives and property of Americans and prevent an anti-American takeover of Ersatz without invading the country.

“At this moment, the vote looks very close. We may not know the outcome until the very end when Senator Mark Williams makes his decision. At last word Senator Williams was still undecided, despite the fact that he is a member of the President’s political party and backed him for the Presidency. It may be that the final vote will be 51-49, with Senator Williams casting the deciding ballot.”

“Sounds like a real thriller, doesn’t it?” said Senator Williams sarcastically as he pulled on his coat and opened the door. “Stay tuned to that station and learn Senator Williams’s choice! Well, it is likely to be a rough day. I’ll be home for dinner.”

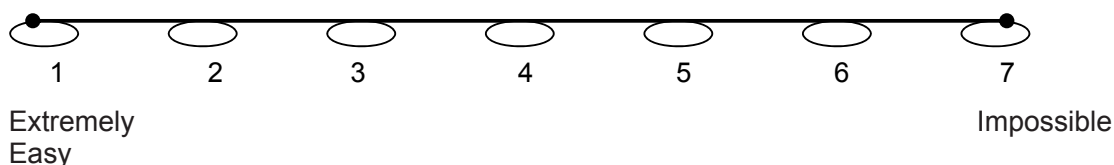
Williams hears further news. As he drove to his office, Senator Williams listened to the latest news from Ersatz on his car radio. . . . Five more Americans had been kidnapped, making a total of fifty-three Americans who had been taken from their cars, from their homes, and in a few cases right out of their offices. Thus far, only men had been captured, leaving behind terror-stricken wives and children . . . Air Force General George Patrick had been quoted as having recommended dropping paratroopers into Ersatz to rescue the Americans, followed by helicopters to airlift all the Americans out. The Department of Defense denied any such plan . . . Meanwhile, Russia said it was studying the situation very carefully. Russian diplomats warned that the problem would become severe if the United States intervened in Ersatz in any way.

“It is not getting any better,” Senator Williams thought. “The revolutionaries seem to be moving about the city at random with little opposition from the Ersatz police or government troops. Within a few hours, the government may fall. Some – maybe many – Americans will be killed. However, what will the President do if we pass the Diego Resolution and give him unrestricted use of the navy as he thinks best? If he invades, the rebels will probably kill those Americans being held, hostage. We might even have to keep forces there to support the present government. What would Russia or China do if we took such action? What would other Latin-American nations do if we were to invade one of their neighbors? Has the President tried all possible channels of communication between American diplomats and the rebel leaders? Don’t we have any allies who might try to negotiate on our behalf so that force would not be necessary?”

Questions for Handout #1

1. Based on the information given thus far, do you believe the President should intervene without Congressional support?
 - a) Strongly Agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Don’t know
 - d) Disagree
 - e) Strongly Disagree
2. Based on the information given, which event or scenario do you believe most relevant in your decision to vote for or against the Diego Resolution?
 - a) Kidnapping of American and foreign hostages
 - b) Previous Presidential abuses of power
 - c) Military intervention to rescue hostages
 - d) Possible Russian or Chinese intervention
 - e) Other

3. By what you know now, how would you vote on the Diego Resolution?
 - a) For the resolution
 - b) Against the resolution
4. If the final vote came down to your deciding ballot; how hard would it be for you to make this decision?



BY WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED THUS FAR, HOW WOULD YOU VOTE – FOR OR AGAINST THE DIEGO RESOLUTION? PLEASE EXPLAIN

(Handout #2)

As he slipped through the side door of his office, Senator Williams was met by his secretary. “Hi, boss. Glad you’re here. The office is a mental institution. People are stacked up in the outer office waiting to see you, and the telephone is constantly ringing. I think everyone in the nation wants to tell you how to vote or be the first to learn what you are going to do.”

“How do people expect me to vote?” Senator Williams asked. “I would estimate that opinion is about 2-1 for your voting for the Diego Resolution and support the president. However, it is sometimes hard to tell. For example, you received a long telegram from the faculty of Sinclair College urging you to vote in such a way that 1) no American lives will be lost, 2) there will be no risk of war, 3) American honor will be preserved, and 4) the President is supported. I’ll let you figure out how they want you to vote.”

“I wish I have a choice like that. What I fear is that if we do not act, someone will be killed; but I’m also afraid that if we do intervene even more people might die. Moreover, would American honor be enhanced or tarnished if we sent an invasion force into a small, defenseless nation? Who is waiting to see me?”

“About twenty reporters and one television crew!” “Tell them I will have no statement to make until after I vote. Who else is waiting?”

“Probably fifteen other people, including Mrs. Fletcher, whose husband is one of the hostages in Ersatz, and Joe Flynn, a representative from Allied Electrical Corporation. As you know, Mr. Flynn’s company not only contributes heavily to your last campaign but also owns considerable property in Ersatz. Incidentally, Mark Jones, the editor of the Globe in your hometown wants you to call.”

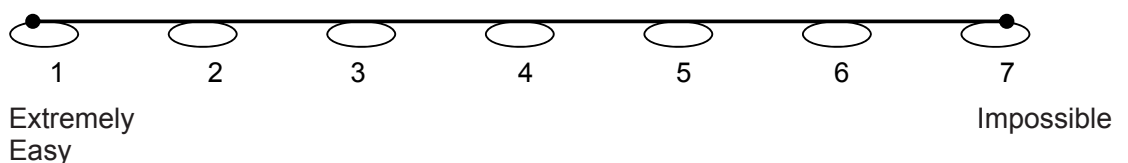
Williams grants some interviews. For the next two hours, Senator Williams met with fourteen people and placed or received eight telephone calls. The most difficult interview was with Mrs. Fletcher, who began to weep as soon as she entered the office; pleading with the Senator not to support the Diego Resolution for fear her husband would be murdered. She urged a policy that would give the revolutionaries what they wanted if they would free the hostages. Joe Flynn, on the

other hand, argued that the Senator should back the President and vote for the Diego Resolution. He pointed out that fifty-three captured Americans were in grave danger regardless of what action was taken. No one could predict what the rebels might do. What was certain was that property in Ersatz owned by Americans would be taken over by the new government if the revolutionaries won.

Between interviews, Senator Williams called Mark Jones. The *Globe* editor wanted to know how the Senator intended to vote so that the paper could carry the story on the front page that evening. Editor Jones also expressed his opinion that the most important factor to consider was that the United States should take a firm stand and make it clear that it would not stand by quietly when its citizens were threatened.

Questions for Handout #2

5. Based on the information given thus far, do you believe the President should intervene without Congressional support?
 - a) Strongly Agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Don't know
 - d) Disagree
 - e) Strongly Disagree
6. Based on the information given, which event or scenario do you believe most relevant in your decision to vote for or against the Diego Resolution?
 - a) That no American lives are lost
 - b) There is no risk of war
 - c) American honor/reputation is preserved
 - d) The President is supported
 - e) Other
7. By what you know now, how would you vote on the Diego Resolution?
 - c) For the resolution
 - d) Against the resolution
8. If the final vote came down to your deciding ballot; how hard would it be for you to make this decision?



BY WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED THUS FAR, HOW WOULD YOU VOTE – FOR OR AGAINST THE DIEGO RESOLUTION? PLEASE EXPLAIN

(Handout #3)

As his last visitor was leaving, Senator Williams's secretary rushed into the office and said: "The President is calling. He is holding on line 9." Senator Williams picked up the phone and said: "Good morning, Mr. President."

"Hi, Mark. Sorry to bother you. I know you're very busy. However, I thought I'd call before you went over to the Senate. Can I count on your vote today?"

"I do not know, Mr. President. I think it is a very messy situation. I'd like to support you, but I am not sure that the Diego Resolution is good for you or the country. The present government of Ersatz lacks strong popular support. I despise the rebel's terrorist tactics, but I'm not sure the United States should intervene in just this way."

"Look, Mark, I need your vote. It is going to be close. Let me give you some information that hasn't been made public. We think we found where the revolutionaries are holding the American hostages. It is in the countryside, a few miles outside the capital city. Ersatz government troops cannot free them because the revolutionaries would surely have warned of the attack hours before it came off. However, I think we have a good chance of dropping our paratroopers in at night, freeing the hostages, and capturing the revolutionary leaders before they know what hit them.

"It is risky, but doing nothing is risky too. We have a message from the rebels that starting today they will execute one American every six hours until the government agrees to free all political prisoners it is holding and enters into negotiations with them."

"Mark, I need your vote. You'll have to trust me on this matter. Many people depend on us to do the right thing. Incidentally, drop by the White House at 5:00 P.M., and I'll fill you in on the plans to free those Americans. I'll see you later."

"Good-bye." Senator Williams returned the telephone to its stand.

Questions for Handout #3

9. Based on the information given thus far, do you believe the President should intervene without Congressional support?
 - a) Strongly Agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Don't know
 - d) Disagree
 - e) Strongly Disagree

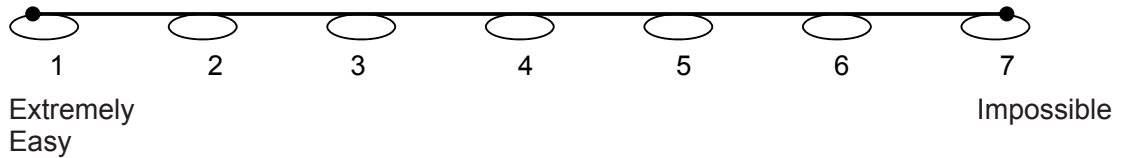
10. Based on the information given, which event or scenario do you believe most relevant in your decision to vote for or against the Diego Resolution?

- a) The possible location of American hostages
- b) Ersatz troops might be unable to free hostages without compromise
- c) Possible American military action
- d) Possible execution of American hostages
- e) Other

11. By what you know now, how would you vote on the Diego Resolution?

- a) For the resolution
- b) Against the resolution

12. If the final vote came down to your deciding ballot; how hard would it be for you to make this decision?



BY WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED THUS FAR, HOW WOULD YOU VOTE – FOR OR AGAINST THE DIEGO RESOLUTION? PLEASE EXPLAIN

(Handout #4)

Roll call had already begun when Senator Williams left his office to walk to the Senate. Just before leaving, he had a call from the Senate majority leader (his party leader) urging him to support the President. In the view of the majority leader, the Diego Resolution would become an important political issue. In his opinion, most Americans favored taking some action to save the hostages. A political party that seemed to lack the courage to act would risk losing many votes in the next election. Moreover, if Williams wanted any help from the President on any of his projects, he should plan to support the President today.

As Senator Williams strode toward the Senate chamber, he was met in the hallway by one of his assistants.

“It looks close, Senator. I think your vote will tip the balance. Incidentally, I just heard on the radio that one of the hostages – a guy named Fletcher – was found. He had been murdered.”

Senator Williams entered the Senate just in time to hear the clerk call his name.

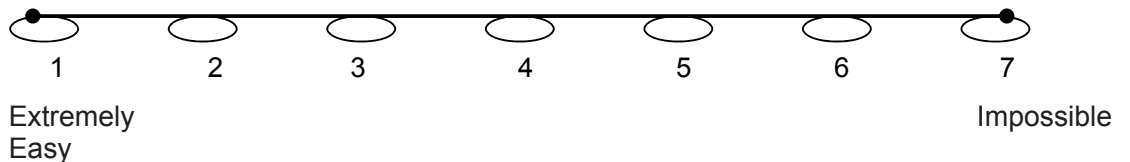
“Senator Williams: Do you vote aye or nay on the resolution before the Senate?”

Questions for Handout #4

13. Based on the information given thus far, do you believe the President should intervene without Congressional support?

- a) Strongly Agree
- b) Agree
- c) Don't know
- d) Disagree
- e) Strongly Disagree

14. Based on the information given, which event or scenario do you believe most relevant in your decision to vote for or against the Diego Resolution?
- a) Most American favored taking action to save the hostages
 - b) A political party that seemed to lack the courage to act would risk losing votes in the next election
 - c) Financial or political support in return for Presidential support
 - d) The murder of Mr. Fletcher
 - e) Other
15. By what you know now, how would you vote on the Diego Resolution?
- a) For the resolution
 - b) Against the resolution
16. If the final vote came down to your deciding ballot; how hard would it be for you to make this decision?



HOW WOULD YOU VOTE?