Trust in the Context of Intercultural Negotiations: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to systematically review research on trust in the context of intercultural negotiations. After reviewing over 600 articles based on abstracts and titles, a comprehensive analysis of 48 selected papers was conducted to propose a conceptual model based on findings and theoretical integration. Trust is a crucial element in negotiations, and it is even more important in intercultural contexts. Individuals from different cultures (low-trust vs. high-trust) not only assess trustworthiness differently and exhibit varying levels of trust but also tend to trust members of other cultures to a lower degree. We combine theories and empirical findings to explain the underlying mechanisms of trust in intercultural negotiations. By integrating Social Identity Theory, Similarity-Attraction Theory, and Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice, we offer a holistic approach. We emphasize adaptability as an essential skill for establishing trustful relationships, encompassing the reduction of perceived threats, the increase of perceived similarity, and the bridging of cultural divides to counteract in-group favoritism. Adaptation influences both the negotiation situation and the process of trust-building, enabling the recategorization of individuals into an extended in-group. This review provides insights for practitioners and scholars by synthesizing the current state of knowledge, highlighting the importance of adaptability in trust-building, and suggesting future research directions in this dynamic field.

Acknowledgement

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Research has confirmed that trust is an essential element for establishing long-term relationships and successful negotiations across different cultures (Brett & Mitchell, 2020; Elahee et al., 2002; Kong et al., 2014; Kong & Yao, 2019; Liu et al., 2012). Trust is "crucial for business success" (Elo et al., 2015, p. 42), can lead to "more convenient commercial conditions" (Mandjak et al., 2019, p. 1217), and is especially important in negotiations, as outcomes are not immediate but "agreements represent explicit promises to engage in certain actions at some point in the future" (Mislin et al., 2011, p. 66).

Negotiation is a process of communication where at least two parties exchange information regarding interests, positions, and needs (Adair, 2003; Elahee & Brooks, 2004) and strive to resolve incompatible goals (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). Given the interdependence of the parties, where the achievement of their goals and outcomes is influenced by each other, trust becomes a critical factor (Pruitt, 1981; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

In recent decades, there has been a notable rise in international interactions involving individuals from diverse cultures (Brett & Okumura, 1998; Cheng et al., 2017; Gunia et al., 2016). In this review, culture is defined as national culture - a set of shared beliefs, values, norms, knowledge, and behaviors that define a particular group of people (Lytle et al., 1995; Mahadevan, 2017; Tylor, 1871). Intercultural negotiations present additional challenges compared to intracultural ones. People come together with different internalized norms, values, and attitudes (Gelfand et al., 2006), vary in ethicality (Volkema, 1998; Yang et al., 2017), favor different normative negotiation behaviors (Gunia et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2012; Luegger et al., 2015), and use diverse communication styles (Hall, 1976; Triandis et al. 1993). Consequently, culture influences both negotiation behavior (Adair et al., 2001; Brett & Okumura, 1998; Lituchy, 1997) and trust (Elahee & Brooks, 2004; Kee, 1969; Yao et al., 2021).

However, there is limited focus on the changes from intra- to intercultural contexts (Brett & Thompson, 2016; Gunia et al., 2016). To enhance our understanding of these complex interactions, it is essential to consider the dynamics that emerge when individuals adapt their behaviors and trust levels at the intercultural negotiation table, including the factors that facilitate such interactions (Adair et al., 2009; Pekerti & Thomas, 2003; Vasilyeva et al., 2023). To capture these in-group and out-group dynamics, we integrate three theories: Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Integrated Threat Theory of prejudice (ITT) (Stephan & Stephan, 1996, 2000), and Similarity-Attraction Theory (SAT) (Byrne, 1969). According to SIT, perceived differences with out-group members can lead to in-group favoritism (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), often driven by feelings of threat and intergroup anxiety as explained by ITT (Stephan & Stephan, 1996, 2000). These are common in intergroup interactions (Stephan et al., 1999) and typically hinder trust. However, perceived similarity can reduce these threats and anxieties, fostering trust (McAllister, 1995). SAT suggests that people are more likely to be attracted to others who share similar attitudes, beliefs, and values (Byrne, 1969). Therefore, successful

intercultural adaptation may reduce intergroup anxiety and recategorize out-group members into an extended in-group, thereby building trust.

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive yet concise overview of the current research landscape on trust in the context of intercultural negotiations. In response to Hodgkinson and Ford´s (2014) recommendation for enhanced rigor, this review employs a systematic approach. This results in a state-of-the-art review of 602 articles and an extensive analysis of 48 relevant papers. Our findings reveal that most research has been conducted in high-trust cultures, highlighting the need for further exploration in low-trust cultures like Latin America and the Middle East, especially by using qualitative research designs, to extend our understandings of trust dynamics in different cultures. Practitioners need to consider that building a trustful relationship in intercultural settings takes time and that cultures define relationships differently, focusing on either professional or personal relationships. This review provides several contributions: First, it organizes and synthesizes the literature through a systematic approach and a theoretical integration that has not been used in this context so far. Second, it underpins the importance of adaptation when negotiating with foreign cultures, as individuals adjust their trust levels and behaviors based on their counterpart´s culture, and appropriate adaptation may itself support the development of trust. Finally, it introduces a conceptual model which explains the trust mechanisms in intercultural negotiations.

This review is structured as follows. We begin by defining trust and providing the theoretical background, followed by the method section. Next, we present the findings, which include an examination of intercultural trust dynamics, the antecedents of trust, the trust building and trust repair processes, as well as the barriers to trust. The subsequent section discusses these findings, presents the Trust-Culture-Negotiation Model, and proposes future research avenues. We close the review with a conclusion.

Defining Trust

The literature presents various definitions of trust. Mandjak et al., (2019, p. 1211) acknowledge that "trust is a highly complex phenomenon". Johnson-George and Swap (1982, p. 1306) define it as "willingness to take risks"; and Mayer et al. (1995, p. 712) explain it in more detail as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party". All these definitions refer to interpersonal trust or trust as a relational factor. Trust is dynamic, it can fluctuate, being formed at some times, and diminished at others (Wu & Laws, 2003).

Trust is inherently fragile, requiring consistent attention and effort to maintain. The necessary conditions for trust are risk and interdependence (Pruitt, 1981). Trust is required only when uncertainty exists, and one need to take a risk. The amount of trust indicates the extent of risk an individual is willing to take (Mayer et al., 1995). Interdependence exists when the interests of one party cannot be achieved without the other party (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). As these factors can vary over the course of an interaction or relationship, they can influence or alter both the form and level of trust (Rousseau et al., 1998). Thus, it is important to consider not only how a level of trust can change over time but also how changes or adaptations throughout interactions may lead to different trust levels.

While the meaning of trust is generally consistent across cultures, perceptions of trustworthiness can vary significantly based on cultural norms, values, and expectations (Gunia et

al., 2011; Kong & Yao, 2019). When negotiators trust each other, they are confident that the other will not exploit their vulnerabilities. If we derive trustworthiness (Kong &Yao, 2019) or trusting beliefs (Kim et al., 2004) from this definition, a counterpart is considered trustworthy if they do not exploit the other´s vulnerabilities (Barney & Hansen, 1994). Mayer et al. (1995) summarize ability, benevolence, and integrity as three factors of trustworthiness. While other researchers have identified different factors like identification, humility, and closeness (Tan et al., 2007), the ABI-model (ability, benevolence, and integrity) is the most frequently cited. However, this tends to be Western culture-bound (Pruitt, 2004) and the degree of importance of each factor shifts across diverse cultural contexts (Kong & Yao, 2019), as well as other factors may arise in cultures beyond the West (Brett & Mitchell, 2020).

Trust is mainly measured by the perception of the other´s trustworthiness using several items with a Likert scale (Calantone et al., 1998; Elahee & Brooks, 2004; Gunia et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2006; Maddux et al., 2011; Mintu-Wimsatt et al., 2005; Yao et al., 2021; Yao & Storme, 2021; Zhang et al., 2015). These items include questions such as: "The other party will try to be someone who keeps promises and commitments" (Gunia et al., 2011, p.778), or "I would trust her/him as my negotiation counterpart" (Yao & Storme, 2021).

Generalized trust is the general tendency of the individual to trust others. This trust dimension refers to trust as a dispositional variable (Ross & LaCroix, 1996) or trust propensity (Kong & Yao, 2019; Mayer et al., 1995). Culture tends to significantly influence how individuals trust their counterparts (Elahee et al., 2002; Shapiro et al., 2008). In the next section, we will focus on the relevant theories, including the differentiation in low-trust and high-trust cultures.

Theoretical Background

Cultures can be classified based on various dimensions. The most frequently used cultural dimension in cross-cultural negotiation research is Hofstede´s collectivism vs. individualism (e.g. Adair et al., 2001; Brett & Okumura, 1998; Natlandsmyr & Rognes, 1995; Francis, 1991; Lituchy, 1997; Mintu-Wimsatt et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2015). This describes the extent to which a society emphasizes the interdependence and cohesion of the group versus the independence and autonomy of the individual (Hofstede, 1980). Another relevant dimension is uncertainty avoidance. This defines how members of a culture feel threatened by unknown situations. High uncertainty avoidance cultures experience higher levels of anxiety and have a greater need of strict rules or regulations (Schumann et al., 2010). The GLOBE study introduced nine cultural dimensions (House et al., 2004). Yet, Aslani et al. (2016) have called for the use of a newer framework, as the use of traditional two-dimensional models leaves theoretical gaps. The dignity-face-honor framework (Leung & Cohen, 2011) is increasingly used in cross-cultural research. For instance, Aslani et al. (2016) demonstrated its usefulness for studying negotiation strategy. An adaptation by Pely & Shimoni (2019) refers to the framework as interest-face-honor.

Brett et al.´s (2017) theoretical framework combines levels of trust and cultural tightness-looseness. Trust propensity or the intension to trust differs among cultures (Brett et al., 2017). This can be distinguished in high-trust (Nations from the West and from East Asia) and low-trust cultures (Nations from South Asia, the Middle East, Latin America) (Brett & Mitchell, 2022; Fukuyama, 1995). High-trust nations are characterized by transparent governments, which protect people´s interests and reduce concerns about exploitation. This promotes a safer environment and lower uncertainty avoidance, encouraging trust in social interactions (Yao & Brett, 2021; Kong, 2013). Generally, high-trust is related to information sharing, Q&A (Questions & answers) and a

cooperative behavior (Brett et al., 2017; Kong et al., 2014). Individuals from low-trust cultures tend to rely more on competitive behavior or S&O (Substantiation & offers) (Gunia et al., 2011). Low-trust individuals are predisposed to link certain behaviors to exploitation (Bazerman, 1994), although there is no clear evidence or "they will find such evidence and may ignore more significant disconfirming evidence" (Ross & LaCroix, 1996, p. 319). This is based on the low-trust cultural environment, where nations like Latin America suffer from corruption and apply low-trust in institutional systems (Brett & Mitchell, 2022). Especially relevant is also the cultural dimension on tightness-looseness (Gelfand et al., 2006). Social norms are less rigidly defined and enforced in loose as opposed to tight cultures. Thus, individuals from loose cultures (countries from the West and Latin America) tend to tolerate more likely deviations from social norms and expectations and rely on interpersonal trust based on their own judgements. In tight cultures (countries from East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East) where strict social norms are enforced, individuals tend to rely on situational norms (Gelfand et al., 2011; Yamagishi et al., 1998). As there are clearly defined norms where behavior is controlled and deviations are sanctioned (Gelfand et al., 2006), people from these cultures would expect others to follow the social norms and rules, would assume no risks, and would generally rely on institutional trust (Takahashi et al., 2008; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). It could be argued that an intracultural interaction would not entail significant risks and thus would not require interpersonal trust, as risk is a prerequisite for trust. However, negotiations, especially intercultural ones, lack clearly defined norms. Consequently, individuals from high-trust, tight cultures, similar to low-trust cultures, tend to reduce their trust levels from an intra- to an intercultural context. In these situations, they behave similarly to individuals from low-trust cultures, where interpersonal trust becomes relevant (Brett, 2007; Gunia et al., 2011).

When negotiating with people from different cultures, there is often an initial sense of disconnection, leading to uncertainty about behavior and a lack of trust (Debabi, 2010; Jungbok et al., 2004). Trust is particularly crucial in situations marked by risk or uncertainty (Kaufmann & Carter, 2006; Ribbink & Grimm, 2014). The complexity of the topic requires an integrated theoretical approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of trust mechanisms. Therefore, we integrate SIT, SAT and ITT to offer a multi-dimensional perspective, where identity, similarity, and threat perceptions interact in complex ways. This is also presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Integrated Theories and Their Connections: Social Identity, Threats, and Similarities*

Category / Theory	Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979)	Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice (ITT) (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; 2000)	Similarity-Attraction Theory (SAT) (Byrne, 1969)
Group Categorization	Individuals categorize themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups, forming the basis of social identity.	ITT builds on these categorizations by showing how these lead to perceived threats from out-groups, resulting in prejudice and defensive behaviors.	SAT reinforces in-group cohesion and out-group differentiation by demonstrating why people prefer those who are similar to them (often members of their in-group),
Consequences	In-group favoritism leads to out-group prejudice as individuals strive to enhance their self-esteem through positive social identity. Social identity can be threatened by out-groups, leading to stronger in-group identification.	Prejudices are often driven by perceived threats from out-groups. Threats can intensify in-group solidarity as a defense mechanism.	Individuals are naturally inclined to favor those similar to themselves, as similarity mitigates perceived threats, reducing intergroup anxiety and enhancing trust within the in-group.
Implications for Strategies	Downplaying out-group threats to reduce the in-group/out-group distinction and encourage a recategorization of out-group members into members of an extended in-group.	Reducing of perceived threats to foster a trustful relationship.	Fostering perceived similarities with out-group members through intercultural adaptation that emphasizes shared values and goals.

The Integrated Threat Theory of prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 1996, 2000) emphasizes the detrimental effects of anxiety caused by perceived threats from an out-group, which can reinforce assumptions and prejudices (Stephan et al., 1999). ITT focuses on the emotional and cognitive processes associated with intergroup interactions. Intercultural negotiations are a form of intergroup contact that can create feelings of intergroup anxiety. These can arise due to negative stereotypes or prior negative experiences with out-group members, which may lead to negative behaviors or attitudes (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; Stephan et al., 1999), or uncertainty (Pekerti & Thomas, 2003), which hinder trust. Uncertainty is a relevant variable as it can predict intergroup bias and prejudice (Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996). As Stephan (2014, p. 239) states "Intergroup anxiety helps us to understand why [intercultural interactions] are often more complicated and difficult than interactions with ingroup members." People experiencing intergroup anxiety are less likely to trust others (Stephan, 2014). A lack of knowledge about the counterpart and their culture can lead to perceived threats. Thus, fostering personal interactions may help to reduce these threats and build trust.

According to Similarity-Attraction Theory (Byrne, 1969), perceived similarity leads to attraction and positive attitudes (Pornpitakpan, 1999) and can reduce threats and foster trust. Intercultural negotiations present additional challenges compared to intracultural ones due to differences in languages, behaviors, and norms (Francis, 1991). Adaptation is typically recommended to overcome these difficulties. The assumption is that bridging cultural distance through adaptation toward the counterpart may lead to perceived similarity (Pornpitakpan, 1999). This similarity can pertain to communication styles, values, attitudes, beliefs, or physical appearance. According to SAT (Byrne, 1969; Newcomb, 1978), individuals are viewed more favorably when they are perceived as similar. Apparent similarity may lead to improved outcomes and foster cooperation (Evans, 1963; McGuire, 1968; Rubin & Brown, 1975). Therefore, increasing perceived similarity - such as sharing common goals and values through intercultural adaptation - is recommended for building trust. Yet, some studies dispute the effects at substantial levels (Francis, 1991), as certain behaviors may be inappropriate for foreigners. While some form of adaptation is generally beneficial, substantial adaptation can be dysfunctional, as this could be interpreted as a manipulative attempt to gain favor (Jones & Wortman, 1973). This can be explained by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into different groups. If individuals from distinct groups meet, as it is in intercultural negotiations, the interpersonal perspective needs to be extended by the intergroup perspective. Trust is generally higher within an in-group due to perceived shared identity. Consequently, a strong desire for distinctiveness can make substantial adaptation by out-group members a threat to their uniqueness (Brewer, 1999; Francis, 1991; Giles & Smith, 1979; Tajfel, 1978). As individuals seek to enhance or maintain positive self-esteem or reduce uncertainty, this can lead to in-group bias and potentially out-group derogation (Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Leach et al., 2008; Mullen et al., 1992). Particularly under conditions of uncertainty, group membership becomes more salient, and group´s norms provide guidance on appropriate behavior (Jetten et al., 2000). Collectivistic cultures and homogenous groups tend to make stronger in-group and out-group distinctions (Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Leach et al., 2008), which can lead to conflict or prejudice. Individuals from these cultures are often more competitive toward out-group members (Takahashi et al., 2008; Triandis, 1972; 1989). Viewing counterparts as out-group members creates a sense of threat, which in turn leads to more competitive behavior. In-group favoritism explains why similarity fosters trust. However, in-group love (attachment and positive feelings toward one´s in-group) does not automatically lead to out-group hate (hostility toward

others outside in-group). Intergroup discrimination is often driven by preferential treatment of in-group members rather than hostility toward out-group members (Allport, 1954; Brewer, 1999, 2017). This aligns with Hamley et al. (2020), who suggest that in-group and outgroup warmth are not inversely related but are distinct constructs. As Brewer (p. 438, 1999) states, "Ultimately, many forms of discrimination and bias may develop not because outgroups are hated, but because positive emotions such as admiration, sympathy, and trust are reserved for the ingroup and withheld from outgroups." This implies that trust is withheld from out-group members because they are perceived as being outside the in-group. By recategorizing and reducing the boundary between "us" and "them", trust-building becomes more achievable in intercultural negotiations. As Hitlin et al. (2021, p. 2) observe "people prioritize in-group members, even artificially created in-groups".

In conclusion, an out-group that is too similar may, in turn, be perceived as a threat to group identity (Hewstone et al., 2002). Therefore, the key is to strike a balance between emphasizing shared values and maintaining distinctiveness. While sharing common goals and values can reduce conflict and foster trust, it is crucial that the in-group´s unique identity is still respected. Intercultural adaptation can mitigate the negative effects of in-group favoritism, facilitating the recategorization of out-group members into an extended in-group.

Method

This paper presents a systematic literature review of the current state of knowledge on trust in the context of intercultural negotiations. This section describes the steps taken to produce this review. To ensure a rigorous and transparent process, this review follows the systematic approach proposed by Denyer and Tranfield (2009), Rousseau et al. (2008), Thorpe et al. (2005), Tranfield et al. (2003). This is in alignment with recent reviews of negotiation literature (Caputo, 2013; Caputo et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2017; Schoen, 2021a, 2021b). Thus, the review is built upon the three phases as outlined by Tranfield et al. (2003): planning and conducting the review, as well as reporting and dissemination.

The systematic accumulation of multiple studies with different designs but consistent findings can establish generalizability (Mulrow, 1994; Rousseau et al., 2008). Conducting a rigorous literature review in management and business research is of key importance, especially due to the increasing, fragmented, and diverse knowledge base (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Mulrow, 1994; Thorpe et al., 2005; Tranfield et al., 2003), including the application of different and competing research philosophies resulting in a variety of approaches toward the progress of knowledge in this research area (Azzopardi & Nash, 2014; Burrell & Morgan, 2019; Gill & Johnson, 2010; Rousseau et al., 2008).

Denyer and Tranfield (2009) summarize four principles for conducting a systematic review, which are: Transparency, inclusivity, explanatory and heuristic.

Identification and Selection of Literature

This subsection explains the process used to produce the systematic review. The search strings were meticulously crafted through a series of systematic steps. The aim was to include all relevant literature on the topic as advocated by Thorpe et al. (2005). In the first stage, a "scoping search" was conducted. This phase involved analysing a selection of relevant articles on negotiations in a cross-cultural context including literature that focused on trust. The objective was

to identify the keywords employed within these articles. In the next step, an investigation was undertaken to analyze keywords used in systematic reviews in the field of negotiations. For the first word group "negotiation", the term "negotiation" is for instance searched in abstracts (Caputo, 2013, p. 381), the terms "negotiation" and "bargaining" in titles (Cheng et al., 2017, p. 300), the terms "negotiati*", bargaining, conflict and agreement in titles and texts (Schoen, 2021b, p. 399), or the terms "negot*" and "bargain*"in titles and abstracts (Buelens et al., 2008, p. 326). Moreover, the terms negotiation and bargaining are proposed to be interchangeable (Rubin & Brown, 1975). For the initial search two levels of keywords were defined using Boolean Operators (AND and OR) and truncation. The first level included the terms cultur*, intercultural, inter-cultural, and cross-cultural. The second level included the terms negotiat* and bargain*. The search was carried out in Scopus including Article title, Abstract and Keywords, and in Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection via the TS (topic) command, including Title, Abstract, Author Keywords and Keywords Plus. Three criteria have been applied for inclusion, including journals, the English language, and relevant subject areas.

The search yielded 15,438 hits in Scopus and 4,863 in Web of Science. To ensure the relevance of articles on intercultural negotiations and on trust literature, a third level of terms considering trust and adaptation, using synonyms gathered from different thesauri, consisting of the terms adapt*, adjust*, alter*, differ*, change, chang*, intracultural, intra-cultural, and trust were added. The search resulted in 7,751 findings on Scopus and 2,522 on Web of Science. In continuation, a bibliometric analysis based on the co-occurrence of keywords was carried out to build a conceptual structure of the documents found. The outcome is a network of themes and their relations to one another. Relying on indexed keywords for such analysis can be heavily contingent on the effectiveness of indexers and their ability to capture all relevant terms (Zupic & Čater, 2015). As a result, author keywords were considered for this analysis. The software VOSViewer was used to create a map and to visualize the results of the bibliometric search in Scopus (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Only keywords that appeared a minimum of 40 times were taken into consideration. This resulted in 40 keywords after excluding four terms related to specific countries. Figure 1 shows the visualization of the conceptual structure of the field and Table 2 shows the emerging clusters and keywords.

The search terms were adjusted due to the keyword analysis, leading to 949 documents from Scopus and 428 from Web of Science.

Table 2. *Clusters and Keywords*

Cluster	Keywords
Migration and Globalization	Acculturation, authencity, belonging, citizenship, cultural identity, diaspora, ethnicity, globalization, hybridity, identity, immigration, migration, multiculturalism, nationalism, transnationalism
Gender	Discourse analysis, ethnography, gender, higher education, intersectionality, masculinity, race, sexuality, women
Power relations in community	Agency, community, diversity, education, islam, power, religion, youth
Focus of the review	Negotiation, trust, intercultural communication, communication, conflict, culture, discourse, family

Figure 1. *Network Diagram and Visualization of Keywords*
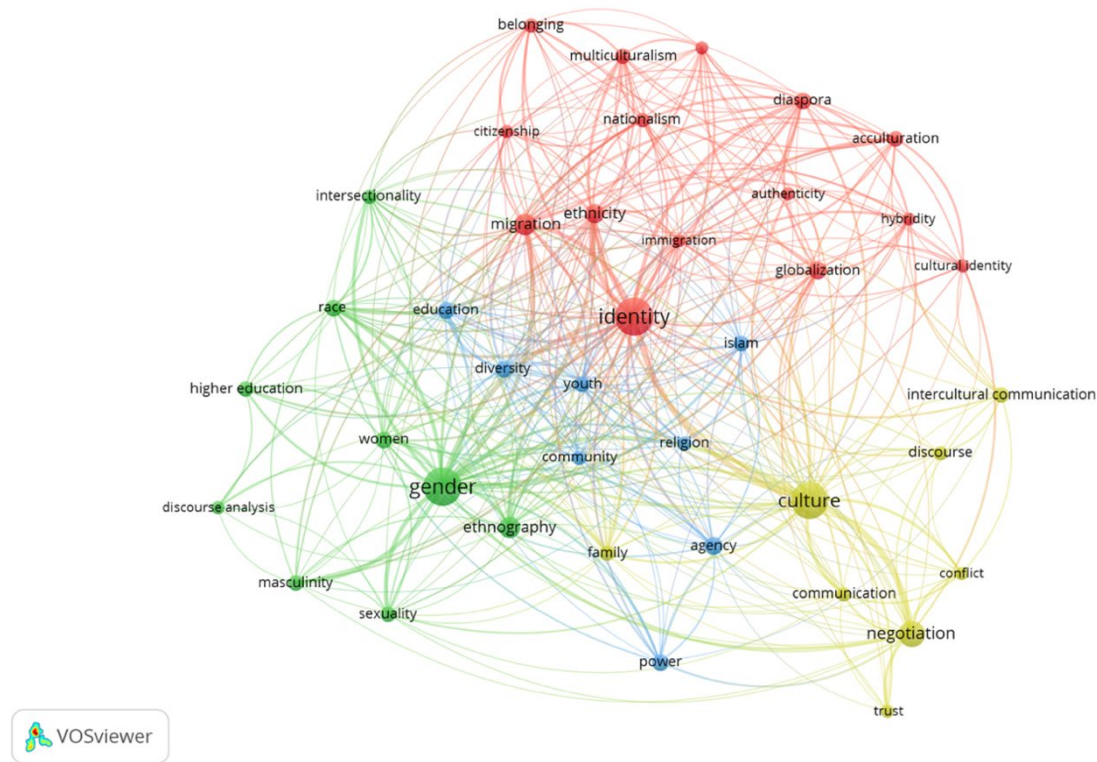
Subsequently, all journals that appeared more than once, were manually checked for their rankings in the academic journal guide (AJG 2021) published by the ABS. However, some relevant journals that were not included in the AJG 2021 were considered for the next stage as well. The combination of journal rankings and topical specialization is supported as appropriate for the inclusion and exclusion of articles (Cheng et al., 2017). In continuation, all articles focused on migration, immigration, acculturation, health, illness, coping, well-being, sexuality, and violence, were excluded using the Boolean Operator "AND NOT". This resulted in 485 (Scopus) and 257 (Wos) findings. After merging duplicates the review sample for further processing resulted in 602 articles. These articles were reviewed based on abstracts and titles. During this step, 491 non-relevant articles were excluded, as they did not contribute to addressing the research aims. Subsequently, 111 articles were selected for full-text analysis. Following this, another 74 articles were excluded based on missing the relevance criteria. Backward and forward citation analysis led to the inclusion of 11 additional articles. The final review sample resulted in 48 articles. As recommended by Denyer and Tranfield (2009), Appendix A summarizes the path to the final review sample through a review protocol.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Following Rousseau et al. (2008) this review integrates studies regardless of their methodological perspective, qualitative and quantitative data, critically reflecting the literature findings and synthesizing a comprehensive body of evidence. Including qualitative studies in a systematic review enriches the findings (Hodgkinson & Ford, 2014) and the aim is "to make a

whole that should be more than the sum of the parts" (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009, p. 680). Appendix B reports the included studies.

The subsequent phase involved coding the articles and identifying themes emerging from their content. Inspired by Wolfswinkel et al. (2013) the process was dynamic: categories were identified and refined iteratively, moving back and forth and resulting in a fine-tuning of categories. Following this process, the structure emerged from the data.

Understanding and Navigating Trust in Intercultural Negotiations

In the context of intercultural negotiations, individuals from different cultures come together to interact and potentially build trustful relationships. While companies or organizations engage in business relationships, it is ultimately the individuals who interact and establish trust, as a company cannot trust (Weck & Ivanova, 2013). In addition to the interpersonal perspective, intercultural negotiations require an intergroup perspective. In intracultural contexts, similarity tends to foster trust (Byrne, 1969). In intercultural contexts, people from different countries often perceive themselves and others as members of distinct groups (Tajfel, 1970; 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This explains how individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from their group memberships, which may lead to in-group bias and misleading assumptions about counterparts potentially resulting in perceived threats (Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

Building or repairing trust is challenging even in intracultural negotiations where individuals share cultural assumptions and values. This intensifies in intercultural negotiations, where individuals interact with differing communication styles, social norms and expectations (Adair, 2003; Adair et al., 2001; Liu et al., 2012; Kong & Yao, 2019). Misunderstandings, misbehavior, and emotions can have long-term implications that can affect the relationship and ultimately trust (Adair, 2003; Elo et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2015).

Individuals tend to vary their behavior and trust levels when dealing with out-group members (intercultural negotiations) compared to in-group members (intracultural negotiations) (e,g, Adair et al., 2009; Elahee et al., 2002; Luegger et al., 2015). They often perceive out-group members as more likely to be untrustworthy or dishonest (Brewer, 1979). This perception aligns with ITT (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; 2000). Individuals have less information about members of out-groups, and thus face more uncertainty (Gelfand & Dyer, 2000; Turner, 1991), which can lead to incorrect assumptions or stereotypes. Adair et al. (2009) demonstrated that US and Japanese negotiators differentiate between intra- and intercultural contexts, basing their behavior not on their own intracultural assumptions but on the stereotypic knowledge or perceptions of the counterpart´s intracultural negotiation schema. Specifically, whether the counterpart is expected to be more competitive, or cooperative can influence adaptation. Consequently, the extent of joint gains, which is the value created in a negotiation (Brett et al., 2017), may be influenced by the nature of these assumptions and by the perceived negotiation type.

Negotiations with out-group members can also lead to suspicion (Lopez-Frenso et al., 2018). This is consistent with the cultural distance concept, which suggests that intercultural negotiations often involve uncertainty (Ha et al., 2004). The ability to adapt can reduce this uncertainty (Alteren & Tudoran, 2019; Peltokorpi 2008) and is therefore a crucial skill for building trust. Perceived similarity can lead to attraction and potentially to trust (Byrne, 1969; McAllister, 1995). Trust can result in better economic outcomes (Butler, 1999; Kong et al., 2014) and is central to successful negotiations (Lewicki & Polin, 2013), or as Druckman and Harinck (2022, p.1198) argue, "Trust may be the most important element in negotiations."

Intercultural Trust Dynamics

Intercultural variation in trust exists (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013) and individuals from different cultures exhibit differences in their intensions to trust or their trust propensity (Kong, 2013; 2016). Empirical studies, such as those by Gunia et al. (2011), indicate lower trust levels in individuals from India compared to those from the US. Appendix C presents an overview of trust data from various waves of the World Values Survey (WVS), a global research project that provides data through surveys, including trust metrics. Western and East Asian countries are generally associated with high-trust, whereas countries from Latin America, Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa are typically associated with low-trust. The ranking in Appendix C is sorted from low-trust to high-trust. To analyze the varying levels of trust toward different group members and within different cultural contexts, we used data from the question, "I´d like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups." We defined "Your neighborhood" as in-group members and "people of another nationality" as out-group members. Figure 2 summarizes these trust levels with black columns and how the trust level reduces in an intercultural context in grey columns. The data shows that Western cultures do not significantly differentiate between in-group and out-group members. The counterparts are assumed to be trustworthy until they prove otherwise (Gunia et al., 2011). In contrast, other cultures show a marked difference in trust toward in-group and out-group members. Drawing on SIT, intercultural interactions can lead to in-group favoritism (Tajfel, 1970; Yang et al., 2017), and potentially to out-group derogation (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Hewstone et al., 2002). Perceived threats to identity may result in distrust (Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

Collectivistic cultures and homogenous groups often make stronger in-group versus out-group distinctions (Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Leach et al., 2008). Consequently, all low-trust cultures, and even high-trust East Asian cultures, exhibit differences in trust levels. This may be because, considering the cultural dimension tightness-looseness, East Asia is a tight culture (Gelfand et al., 2006) and they generally rely on institutional trust. In intercultural negotiations where norms and rules are not clearly defined, the focus shifts to interpersonal trust (Gunia et al., 2011; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Thus, uncertainty and perceived threat in intercultural interactions, as well as a lack of clearly defined norms, can lead to low trust levels, even in high-trust, tight cultures.

Consequently, whether individual trust can be derived from societal trust depends on the degree of face norms and whether information is processed holistically or analytically. A holistic approach considers the primary elements as well as their surrounding context (Nisbett et al., 2001). Yao and Brett (2021) demonstrate that societal trust can predict attitudinal trust and behavioral trust. However, in cultures with strong face norms (e.g. in East Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia), and holistic mindsets (especially in Latin America), this relationship is weaker.

People from the same culture share social norms and behavioral patterns (Patterson, 1983). In contrast, people from different cultures rely on distinguishing behavioral norms, which can lead to uncertainty due to unfamiliar norms and styles (Adair, 2003; Gudykunst, 1985). Consequently, intercultural interactions are often characterized by adaptation (Kim, 1988). Additionally, misunderstandings and conflicts may arise which can violate or reduce trust. Hall (1976) proposed the differentiation between high-context and low-context cultures, distinguishing an indirect style relying on implicit messages and indirect cues from a direct style relying on explicit communication (Hall, 1976). Explicit communication involves sharing priorities and interests,

Figure 2. *Trust Scores in %*
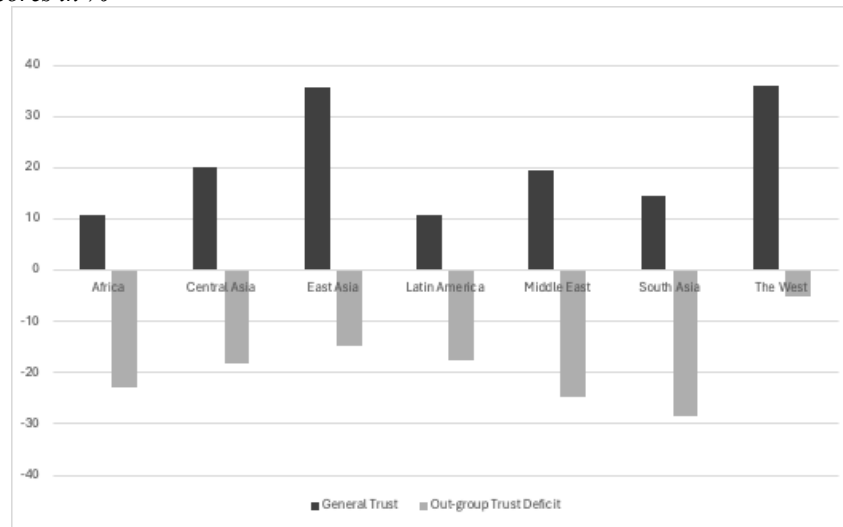
Note. Data Source: World Values Survey Wave 4-7 (Haerpfer et al., 2022; Inglehart et al., 2014).

facilitating integrative agreements where both parties are satisfied. Communication styles are linked with cultural values, specifically collectivism with high-context and individualism with low-context (Pekerti & Thomas, 2003). Hall adds that these styles are further differentiated by their degree of communicative flexibility. High-context negotiators are assumed to be able to use direct and indirect communication and are more likely to adapt to their counterparts, while low-context negotiators primarily rely on direct communication (Adair, 2003; Hall, 1976). This is consistent with studies where Japanese negotiators adapted to their US American counterparts, while the latter did not adapt their behaviors (Adair, 2003; Adair et al., 2001). Indirect communication can also create tension for low-context negotiators (Lee et al., 2006). Therefore, direct integrative communication emerges as the pivotal juncture where behavioral patterns are most likely to match in an intercultural interaction (Adair, 2003). However, indirect communication via offers through heuristic trial and error search can also lead to integrative agreements or joint gains (Pruitt, 1981). This approach involves evaluating the evolution of offers over time, indicating negotiator´s flexibility on less valuable issues and their reluctance to compromise on more valuable ones (Adair et al., 2001; Adair, 2003; Pruitt, 1981). Different communication styles may lead to misinterpretations and challenges in effectively conveying messages and building rapport which is essential for trust building or trust repairing.

Elahee et al., 2002 and Elahee & Brooks, 2004 showed that individuals from Canada and the US do not significantly vary their trust levels or use of ethically questionable negotiation tactics between intra- and intercultural contexts. In contrast, Mexican individuals reduce their trust levels and increase the use of ethically questionable negotiation tactics in intercultural contexts. This aligns with the categorization of in-groups and out-groups as per SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and ITT (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), which suggests that perceived out-group threats may lead to lower trust and defensive behaviors. Consequently, the intercultural trust level may differ from that in intracultural settings, where SAT (Byrne, 1969) predicts that perceived similarity fosters trust. These differences must be considered when defining a negotiation strategy.

Antecedents and Consequences of Trust

Culture influences trust, affecting individuals´ intentions to trust across different cultural contexts. Empirical studies usually demonstrate lower joint gains in intercultural negotiations, (Adair et al., 2001; Brett & Okumura, 1998; Graham, 1985) which may arise due to a lack of skills to adapt successfully. This failure to disprove negative stereotyping and prejudice toward the counterpart and to establish a trustful relationship contributes to the reduced negotiation outcomes.

In their trailblazing study, Brett & Mitchell (2020, 2022) identified key actions that managers use when searching and deciding to place trust in various cultures. These include due diligence (search for information about the counterpart), brokerage (introduction to the counterpart by a third party), goodwill building (social interactions like small talk or a common dinner), and testing (asking and evaluating how the counterpart acts or reacts). The first two actions are done before a direct interaction with the potential counterpart occurs. The latter two actions occur in direct interactions and include the own judgement.

The trustworthiness of the counterpart is frequently evaluated using the dimensions ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). Acting cooperatively and adopting a problem-solving perspective can reassure the counterpart and alleviate concerns about exploitation (Deutsch, 1958; Lewicki et al., 1994). Trustworthiness of the other could be related according to Butler (1991) to consistency, availability, discreetness, competence, fairness, integrity, loyalty, openness, promise fulfillment, and receptivity. Brett and Mitchell (2020) suggest respect, mutual values, competence, openness, and professionalism as criteria for determining the trustworthiness of a business partner across different cultures. In low-trust, loose cultures, negotiators determine the trustworthiness by focusing on mutual values or similarities, which aligns with SAT (Byrne, 1969), as perceived similarity fosters trust. In low-trust, tight cultures, the focus is on respect for cultural differences, which can be understood through ITT (Stephan & Stephan, 1996, 2000), as managing perceived threats helps to build trust. High-trust, tight cultures, mainly prioritize the competence, which suggests that proving competence is a form of reducing threats. Meanwhile, in high-trust, loose cultures trustworthiness is often assumed, and the focus shifts to openness to information sharing during interactions (Brett & Mitchell, 2020), reflecting a low level of perceived threat and a general predisposition toward trust. These varying criteria for trustworthiness highlight the importance of adapting negotiation strategies across different cultural contexts.

The ability to adapt and communicate effectively is closely tied to one´s open-mindedness. This is an important personality trait enabling negotiators to understand counterpart´s priorities, respect diverse norms and values, and foster a sense of mutual understanding (Alteren & Tudoran, 2019). Cultural Intelligence (CQ) has been identified as a key factor in improving negotiation performance (Groves et al., 2015; Imai & Gelfand, 2010).

When a low-context party (from the West) shares information, they expect their counterpart to reciprocate, as Gouldner (1960) described. Refusing to reciprocate can hinder trust (Brett & Mitchell, 2020). However, if a high-context negotiator reciprocates indirectly, the low-context negotiator may not understand the other´s move (Brett & Okumura, 1998). This highlights the challenges of intercultural negotiations. Thus, experience with a counterpart from another culture can indicate their trustworthiness and predict future behavior (Styles et al., 2008).

Negotiation behavior is typically labelled integrative or distributive. The first is associated with Q&A (Questions & answers), assumed to create value and generate joint gains as priorities and interests are revealed, leading to win-win outcomes (Gunia et al., 2016; Kong et al., 2014; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). and in turn develop trust (Yao et al., 2017). Lopez-Fresno et al.

(2018, p. 13) conclude "they create a climate of trust that opens the door to future relationships." This can be called the high-trust path to joint gains (Kong et al., 2014). Distributive strategies are labelled as S&O (substantiation & offers) strategies and assumed to claim value, leading to win-lose scenarios (Elahee & Brooks, 2004; Weingart et al., 1990, 2004). Integrative behavior can be direct and indirect. Multi-issue offers can be assumed as integrative (Gunia et al., 2014), single-issue offers rather represent distributive positioning (Adair, 2003). The basis for the application of an integrative strategy seems to be trust (Yamagishi, 1986). As the counterpart could take advantage of the shared information, a person must be willing to accept the risk before starting with questions and answers. Questions may be used as they could show what a negotiator doesn´t know. Answers reveal information about priorities which could contain sensitive information and could be exploited (Butler, 1999; Gunia et al., 2011; Kong et al., 2014). Low-trust elicits more likely a distributive strategy and high-trust more likely an integrative strategy. However, Brett et al. (2021) has shown that the assumption of a cooperative behavior through information sharing and joint gains is Western culture-bound. Additionally, distributive strategies do not necessarily mean less insight as Gunia et al.´s (2011) study showed. Caputo et al. (2019) even argue that individuals with high levels of collectivism tend to favour an integrative negotiation style. They would opt for a competitive negotiation style only when they score high on cultural intelligence.

According to Kee (1969), distrustful negotiators tend to make smaller offers, are more likely to use lies and threats, and make fewer attempts to exchange information. Studies indicate that trust may lead to a decrease in use of unethical negotiation behaviors (Elahee et al., 2002) and less deception (Dees & Cramton, 1991). Since deception can reduce joint gains and even break relationships, mutual trust could help prevent such behavior. This aligns with Zhang et al. (2015) who showed that cognition-based trust among Chinese negotiators reduce the use of deception, while affect-based trust might increase informational deception. This underscores the importance of building professional relationships in China or East Asian countries based on reliability and credibility. It can be distinguished between emotional and informational deception. Cultures differentiate in their use of emotions, which for instance was shown by Ramirez Marin et al. (2022) relating to anger and happiness and their consequences. They suggest that angry negotiators may secure greater concessions from their counterparts in intercultural negotiations. This is due to the higher uncertainty when interacting with foreigners; angry counterparts may evoke fear, leading to more concessions. Although this might result in favorable short-term outcomes, the long-term consequences on relationships and trust are likely negative. This also indicates the increased uncertainty in intercultural interactions, which depends on the counterpart´s culture. For instance, expressing anger is seen as culturally inappropriate in China (Adam et al., 2010), while it is socially acceptable in the United States. Additionally, informational deception is more acceptable in collectivistic cultures, where it is less likely to be detected due to the implicit communication style (Zhang et al., 2015).

Breaking trust causes more harm than good in the long-term, even if there seems to be immediate benefits at the moment of betrayal (Ross & LaCroix, 1996). This aligns with the use of ethically questionable negotiation tactics, which can cultivate distrust in the long run (Banai et al., 2014). Several studies explore the use of questionable negotiation tactics. Lewicki and Robinson (1998) summarize five: Bluffing, misrepresentation of position to an opponent, traditional competitive bargaining, attacking the opponent´s network, and inappropriate information gathering. When a negotiator detects unethical behavior, they tend to have lower trust toward their counterpart (Boles et al., 2000), and become more competitive (Kimmel et al., 1980). Conversely, higher trust levels may reduce the likelihood of unethical behavior (Elahee et al., 2002). However,

Banai et al., 2014 did not find an overall relationship between trust propensity and ethically questionable negotiation tactics. This might be due to the participants being from low-trust cultures. Other studies suggest that Chinese negotiators are less likely to use these tactics interculturally (Yang et al., 2017). Elahee et al. (2002) and Elahee and Brooks (2004) found a negative relationship between trust and the use of ethically questionable negotiation tactics for Mexican individuals. This needs to be further studied.

Trust Building

Trust is a requirement for effective negotiations and mutually beneficial outcomes (Kong et al., 2014; Wu & Laws, 2003). At least some degree of trust seems to be necessary to enter an agreement (Ross & LaCroix, 1996), and it is most needed when there is a strong conflict of interests (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013). Naudé and Buttle (2000) emphasize that trust plays a significant role in determining relationship quality, noting that the duration of the relationship may also influence its quality.

Trust propensity determines the initial trust level before any interaction takes place. This varies across cultures (high-trust vs. low-trust) and can be influenced by external information, third party recommendations, assumptions, or previous experiences with individuals from the counterpart´s culture. This is followed by experienced trust that is generated between the parties during exchanges (Mandjak et al., 2019). Sharing common values can lead to trust. Thus, building a trustful relationship should be easier in an intracultural setting. This is often attributed to the presumption of greater cooperativeness in intracultural contexts, where compatible behaviors and values are common (Brett & Okumura, 1998), as reduced threats prevail in such settings (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), and similarity tends to promote trust (Adler & Graham, 1989; Byrne 1971). The general interaction with an out-group member and the opponent´s nationality can be relevant in determining trustworthiness in the pre-negotiation stage. Therefore, it is suggested that if individuals adapt, this could lead to shared values and similarities, thus fostering interpersonal attraction (Byrne, 1969; Newcomb, 1978). Value congruence could increase trust levels (Jones & George, 1998).

Trust building is different across cultures. Western cultures rely on quick trust (Alon & Brett, 2007) or the "swift trust" assumption: They trust a counterpart until the counterpart proves to be untrustworthy (Gunia et al., 2011). Additionally, individuals from Western cultures tend to prefer a quick small talk. This could be because individuals from Western cultures perceive fewer threats, resulting in less time spent on trust-building activities. In contrast, trust building in African cultures takes more time, as these cultures emphasize group harmony and value relationships (Sharma et al., 2020). Similarly, in the Arabic-speaking world and Latin America, negotiations typically do not begin until a certain level of trust has been established (Alon & Brett, 2007; Brett & Mitchell, 2020; Mandjak et al., 2019; Sobral et al., 2008). In these cultures, negotiations are seen as trust-building interactions (Alon & Brett, 2007), that require more time and effort to reduce perceived threats and foster common ground. They may be longer the higher the value of the transaction. Consequently, taking time is the price for building trust (Alon & Brett, 2007; Mandjak et al., 2019). It is also essential to acknowledge the different emphasis on relationships. While East Asia and the West focus on professional relationships, other regions focus on personal relationships (Brett & Mitchell, 2020; Mandjak et al., 2019), and "if one focuses too much on business and too little on the person" (Alon & Brett, 2007, p. 69), it could damage the relationship. As Alon and Brett (2007, p. 61) argue for negotiations in Arabic-speaking countries, "Engaging in

conversation that follows these rules can be expected to strengthen the negotiation relationship." Thus, adapting appropriately can help establish a trustful relationship. This includes respecting the differences in cultural norms, taking time for social interactions, sharing information, building understanding, or involving a third party for introductions (Brett & Mitchell, 2020; Gunia et al., 2014; Wu & Laws, 2003). Small talk or schmoozing can also enhance trustworthiness (Ramirez Marin et al., 2019), with more time spent on small talk correlating with higher trust (Mislin et al., 2011). Social interaction and open communication with the counterpart are crucial for trust building, as trust develops through a process of learning and experiencing to work with the counterpart (Blois, 1999).

Trust can be created or destroyed through cooperative or competitive moves (Ross & LaCroix, 1996). This indicates that adaptation is a relevant variable for building trust and that this can be influenced by the choice of negotiation behavior. The choice depends on the trust level involved (Mandjak et al., 2019) and the assumptions of the counterpart (Adair, 2009; Mintu-Wimsatt, 2005). A cooperative move, if reciprocated, leads to trust, otherwise it leads to a competitive move by the other party (Axelrod, 1984). Sharing information in Western cultures, is defined as a trustworthy behavior. If the counterpart does not reciprocate this is interpreted as an untrustworthy behavior (Gunia et al., 2011). When individuals adapt their negotiation behavior to align with a Q&A strategy, it is assumed to lead to the creation of joint gains (Ribbink & Grimm, 2014). Conversely, adapting to S&O strategies, like perceptions of zero-sum, tend to result in conflict and reduced joint gains (Adair, 2003; Gunia et al., 2016). Thus, culture and trust influence negotiation behavior (Brett et al., 2017; Elahee & Brooks, 2004; Elahee et al., 2002; Gunia et al., 2011; Kee, 1969; Luegger et al., 2015; Yao et al., 2021).

Studies also suggest that individuals may adapt their behavior in intercultural negotiations, not toward the other but by exaggerating their intracultural behavior. Interaction with an out-group member can create uncertainty (Pekerti & Thomas, 2003). This could be explained by a low initial trust level and by the focus on the distinctiveness between the groups (Tajfel, 1970; 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A moderate level of cultural adaptation should lead to successful outcomes (Francis, 1991) and successful trust development (Weck & Ivanova, 2013). Learning of the counterpart´s cultural values and norms is essential to build trust. Further interactions and learnings of the counterpart lead to an understanding of an appropriate level of adaptation, allowing the individuals to move from cautious interactions to a deeper trusting relationship (Weck & Ivanova, 2013). In their study, Lopez-Fresno et al. (2008) describe a scenario in which one party in an intercultural negotiation included a negotiator of Asian origin in an attempt to foster a climate of trust. Paradoxically, this action raised suspicions and distrust in the other party, likely due to differing expectations. In contrast, Pornpitakpan´s (1999) findings demonstrate that this curvilinear relationship is not confirmed for collectivistic or tight cultures like Thailand and Japan. This could be due to a higher focus on social harmony (Leung et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2015), where substantial adaptation may be interpreted as a sign of respect (Pornpitakpan, 1999). However, while the findings showed that high levels of cultural adaptation did not decrease favorability, adaptation beyond a moderate degree did not increase it. Therefore, a moderate level of adaptation is generally recommended. Consequently, adaptation is a predominant factor in intercultural negotiations and should be considered in preparing the negotiation strategy during an interaction. In alignment with ITT and SAT, cultural adaptation can lead to reduced threats, increased attraction and trust. Yet, a substantial adaptation can lead to suspicion and can violate trust, as out-group members could be seen as threatening the in-group´s identity. In conclusion, moderate adaptation can lead to reduced uncertainty and intergroup anxiety and thus build a

trustful relationship. Negotiators need to reduce uncertainty to diminish unfavorable adaptation by the counterpart and to build trust. Whereby, an appropriate level of adaptation may itself support the building of a trustful climate. This is dependent on personality traits and on several skills.

Developing a trustful relationship can be facilitated by a willingness to adapt which demonstrates a genuine interest in a long-term business relationship (Lohtia et al., 2009). Open-minded persons are better skilled in adapting (Alteren & Tudoran, 2019). Adaptive skills and cultural sensitivity can reduce other-anxiety in such interactions where uncertainty can prevail (Lohtia et al., 2009; Shapiro et al., 2008; Wu & Laws, 2003) and are in turn important to enhance communication with partners from other cultures, as trust often emerges as a result of successful communication (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2014). Communication should involve the clarification and the exchange of expectations (Adair et al., 2001). Other skills like intercultural competencies (Elo et al., 2015) and cultural intelligence (Groves et al., 2015) are also essential skills to build trust in intercultural negotiations. Cultural intelligence describes the ability to communicate effectively across cultures, self-awareness of one´s cultural biases, comprehension of cultural norms and values, and the flexibility to adapt in unfamiliar contexts. It also describes why some people are globally more effective than others (Ang et al., 2007). This includes the willingness and motivation to engage in new and potentially uncertain settings and facilitate intercultural negotiations (Groves et al., 2015; Imai & Gelfand, 2010; Liu et al., 2012).

Experienced negotiators may be more confident in negotiating with an out-group member and should feel less uncertainty (Adair et al., 2009; Gudykunst, 1995), thus, thinking beyond simple stereotypes (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). If the counterpart will be less experienced, than the experienced negotiator would be the one who should compensate and lead toward the reduction of counterpart´s uncertainty. This aligns with the interaction adaptation theory (Burgoon et al, 1995). This theory addresses the adaptation processes in interactions. Individuals enter those interactions with requirements, expectations, and desires (RED). If one´s RED are met, this will be positively reciprocated. However, if those are not met, one will diverge, to deescalate the situation (Burgoon et al., 1995). In contrast, if prejudices or negative assumptions do not prove true, this can lead to a more positive interaction and can lead toward a trustful relationship (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2005).

Additionally, biculturals are assumed to be better skilled at closing social distances between different cultures (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). In an intercultural study on negotiations with Korean and US participants, Kern et al (2012) showed that intercultural dyads achieved higher joint gains than intracultural dyads, presumably due to the bicultural parties (Kern et al., 2012).

Moreover, the choice of communication medium is important. Face-to-face negotiations can lead to higher trust than online negotiations, which often result in a decreased desire for future interactions. Face-to-face meetings are indispensable for trust building and repairing trust (Milgram, 1972; Lopez-Fresno et al., 2018; Naquin & Paulson, 2003). Caputo et al. (2023) found in their review on conflict in virtual teams that virtuality negatively affects trust levels, impacting conflict dynamics. This finding is also relevant for negotiation contexts. Therefore, negotiators should focus on meeting their counterparts in person, at least in the initial phase of the business relationship, to build trust.

Finally, while negotiators from high-relational cultures appreciate relational efforts, those from low-relational cultures are less concerned about the relationship (Lovett et al., 1999). A "relational negotiator" can strengthen relational capital, thereby increasing the level of trust in interactions with high-relational cultures (Cheng et al., 2017). Relational capital includes relational assets and mutual evaluation after the negotiation, encompassing mutual trust and fostering cooperation (Gelfand et al., 2006). This aligns with Yao & Storme (2021) who suggest that

relationship satisfaction is necessary to build trust. A negotiator´s satisfaction with the relationship is particularly relevant for long-term trust building.

Trust Repair

Trust is a fragile construct and can be easily broken (Mandjak et al., 2019). Trust violation leads to reduced trust that may lead the trustee (the mistrusted party) to make efforts to repair trust. But how can trust be repaired? Research suggests that the process of trust repair may be more challenging than that of initial trust building (Kim et al., 2004), that trust recovery takes time (Lopez-Fresno et al., 2018), and several trust repair tactics are proposed, including apologies, denials, remedies, sincerity, reticence, or open and authentic as well as honest communication (e.g. Kim et al., 2004; Lopez-Fresno et al., 2018; Maddux et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of trust repair is subject to the type of violation and the culture, as forgiveness tends to differ across cultures (Kim et al., 2004). Similarly, how blame is assigned differs, as demonstrated in a study by Chiu et al. (2000). Following a news account reporting a pharmacist´s mix-up of medicines resulting in hundreds of patients falling ill, participants from China tended to attribute blame to the pharmacy, whereas Americans predominantly attributed blame to the individual pharmacist.

Apologies are a frequently mentioned trust repair mechanism. In contrast, to the meaning of trust that tends to be similarly understood amongst cultures, apologies differ in their meaning and function. Maddux et al. (2011) tested in a survey and experimental study the different interpretations between US-Americans and Japanese. While an apology in the US involves an admission of responsibility and an expression of regret, in Japan, it involves acknowledging the burden experienced by the recipient, emphasizing interconnectedness, and offering sympathy toward the counterpart. Apologies are more effective in cases of proven guilt or in case of competence-based violations, while denials are better suited for proven innocence or integrity-based violations (Kim et al., 2004). However, this may be differently perceived in other cultures, where other trustworthiness criteria are the focus and where apologies or denials could be interpreted differently. As suggested by Maddux et al. (2011) apologies are more effective in case of Americans for competence violations, and in case of Japanese for integrity violations. In their study, Japanese apologized more often and even in cases they were not responsible for the cause. This shows that to repair trust, tactics must be chosen carefully, especially when different cultures meet at the negotiation table with varying norms, to avoid escalating the conflict.

Consequently, as the willingness to trust is essential for building trust, the trustor´s (the violated party) willingness to accept repair efforts is crucial for successful trust repair (Kim et al., 2009). However, if the trustee unknowingly violates counterpart´s trust, they may not recognize it, and trust repair efforts may not follow (Kim et al., 2009). In intercultural settings, this can lead to increased perceived threat (ITT), which may heighten the distinction between in-group and outgroup members (SIT) and diminish the trust level. Trust violations stem from misunderstandings due to differing cultural values and norms (Kong & Yao, 2019). Trust repair may be easier if the violation was unconscious (Kim et al., 2009). We suggest that it is also essential to consider which criterion of trustworthiness has been violated. If we consider Brett & Mitchell´s (2020) trustworthiness criteria it would mean that if trust has been broken in areas such as respect, competence, values, openness, or professionalism, the trust repair measure should focus accordingly.

Barriers to Trust Development

In general, trust is the key to accepting vulnerability and to sharing information as the other is expected to be trustworthy and assumed not to exploit the shared information (Kong et al., 2014; Rousseau et al., 1998). However, if trust building seems not to be possible, Yao et al. (2021) suggest an alternative path to joint gains. Achieving high joint gains requires a general exchange of information. Although low-trust individuals, may not want to share direct information, they could use a multi-issue offer strategy (MIOs), which is an indirect style, that can lead to insights and joint gains, particularly when information is processed holistically (Yao et al., 2021). Consequently, by using this approach low-trust negotiators may also achieve joint gains. If the mindset is holistic rather than analytic, insights tend to be more accurate. They differ from S&O strategies, by incorporating multi-issue offers, which enable joint gains through concessions on low-priority issues while maintaining firm positions on high-priority issues (Brett et al., 2017; Yao et al., 2021). However, single-issue offers (SIOs) only focus on one issue at a time, and this could not reveal insights into the overall priorities and to trade-off potentials (Henderson et al., 2006). Therefore, MIOs can be successful for low-trust negotiators, as they can lead to insights and high joint gains (Yao et al., 2021). Alternatively, MIOs may lead to high joint gains without insights, but due to the concession mechanism or a trial-and-error process (Pruitt, 1981).

Chen et al. (2003) propose in their study self- and other concerns to be relevant for outcomes in negotiations. Egoistic negotiators with a high aspiration level will achieve higher individual profits only when the counterpart has prosocial motives. This relies on the dual concern model; win-win outcomes are only possible when integrative behavior is paired with a high resistance to yielding, a distributive behavior. This could indicate, that if trust is built, cooperative behavior may follow, and exploitation could be avoided, if there is a high resistance to yielding. The dual concern model is a framework that maps negotiation styles in a two-dimensional space of concerns (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Consequently, the dark side or second face of trust needs to be considered as well. As protections of being harmed are disarmed in trusting relationship, this could lead to exploitation and to betrayal. Warning signs of untrustworthiness that would be normally recognized, may not be heeded (McAllister, 1997). Trust may also cause biases and lead to suboptimal judgments and lower outcomes (Kong & Yao, 2019). A high level of affect-based trust increases the acceptance for informational deception (Zhang et al., 2015). Kong et al. (2014) showed in their meta-analysis, that integrative behavior was negatively related to trustor´s outcome but positively related to distributive behaviors. This implies that further research is needed that not only focus on joint gains but include individual gains and the second face of trust.

Discussion and Future Research Directions

We have reviewed existing literature on trust in the context of intercultural negotiations. The literature provides valuable insights; yet, the results show that there is still much to do in this research field. In this section, we begin by summarizing the key findings and continue by proposing a conceptual model that incorporates the relations of the main variables influencing trust, underpinned by findings and by theoretical integration. Finally, we explore future research opportunities.

Intercultural negotiations are challenging because individuals encounter different social norms, values and communication styles (Francis, 1991; Kong & Yao, 2019). The uncertainty in unfamiliar situations, unknown cultures, and interactions with foreigners causes individuals to

adapt their trust levels and adjust their behaviors, as they tend to trust outgroup members less than their compatriots. Individuals categorize counterparts into in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Negative assumptions or stereotypes can lead to prejudices (Elahee et al., 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2014) as explained by ITT (Stephan & Stephan, 1996, 2000). Intercultural adaptation that emphasizes shared values or goals can, in turn, reduce intergroup anxiety as per SAT. Different languages and implicit communication styles can cause misunderstandings and conflicts, potentially breaking the business relationship (Brett & Okumura, 1998; Hall, 1976). Cultures vary in how they determine the trustworthiness of a counterpart. Generally, cultures are divided into high-trust (typically Western and East Asian countries) and low-trust (typically Latin American, South Asian and the Middle Eastern, Central Asian, and African countries) cultures. Considering tightness-looseness is necessary to explain trust differentiation between in-group and out-group members, as described in the conceptual model. Drawing on SIT and ITT, we suggest that shared values and similarities reduce uncertainty and perceived threats, thereby fostering trust between individuals. Therefore, appropriate adaptation is essential for building and repairing trust in intercultural negotiations. Personality traits and skills like cultural sensitivity, cultural intelligence and open-mindedness are crucial for success in intercultural interactions (Alteren & Tudoran, 2019; Groves et al., 2015; Imai & Gelfand, 2010). Finally, trust building takes time and patience, and negotiators should meet in person to establish relationships, especially with individuals from high-relational cultures. In contrast, low-relational cultures, typically Western countries, focus less on trust building and rely more on professional relationships. Research acknowledges the importance of trust in business relationships (Kong et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2012; McAllister, 1995); however, the second face of trust needs to be considered to exercise caution to avoid exploitation.

The Trust-Culture-Negotiation Model is illustrated in Figure 3. This model distinguishes between two key stages: the pre-negotiation stage, where individuals primarily evaluate counterparts´ trustworthiness based on assumptions and third-party information, and the negotiation stage, where individuals meet, communicate, and can make decisions based on direct interaction and personal observation. This aligns with the findings of Brett & Mitchell (2020; 2022) who demonstrated that individuals from different cultures undertake various actions when searching for information to evaluate a counterpart´s trustworthiness before the first meeting, and then make decisions on firsthand data during direct interactions. Other studies has shown that pre-assumptions and general trust play a significant role in the early stages of interactions (Adair et al., 2009; Gunia et al., 2011; Mandjak et al., 2019; Yao & Storme, 2021). Cultures vary in their trust propensity and can be categorized in high-trust and low-trust cultures. Individuals from low-trust cultures tend to assume their counterparts as untrustworthy until they build a relationship that allows to trust each other (Gunia et al., 2014; 2011).

Individuals from high-trust cultures give the counterpart the benefit of the doubt (Lewicki et al., 1996), a phenomenon known as 'quick trust' (Alon & Brett, 2007) or 'swift trust' (Gunia et al., 2011; Meyerson et al., 1996). This definition is only valid for Western countries. To explain the difference between Western and East Asian countries, both of which are high-trust cultures, we need to consider the cultural dimension tightness-looseness. This helps also to explain why East Asian countries vary their intension to trust depending on the cultural context. Tight cultures, characterized by clearly defined norms and a low tolerance for deviant behavior, often rely on institutional trust to guide interpersonal interactions (Gelfand et al., 2006). Since negotiations typically lack clearly defined norms, this issue becomes even more evident in intercultural settings.

Figure 3. *The Trust-Culture-Negotiation Model.*
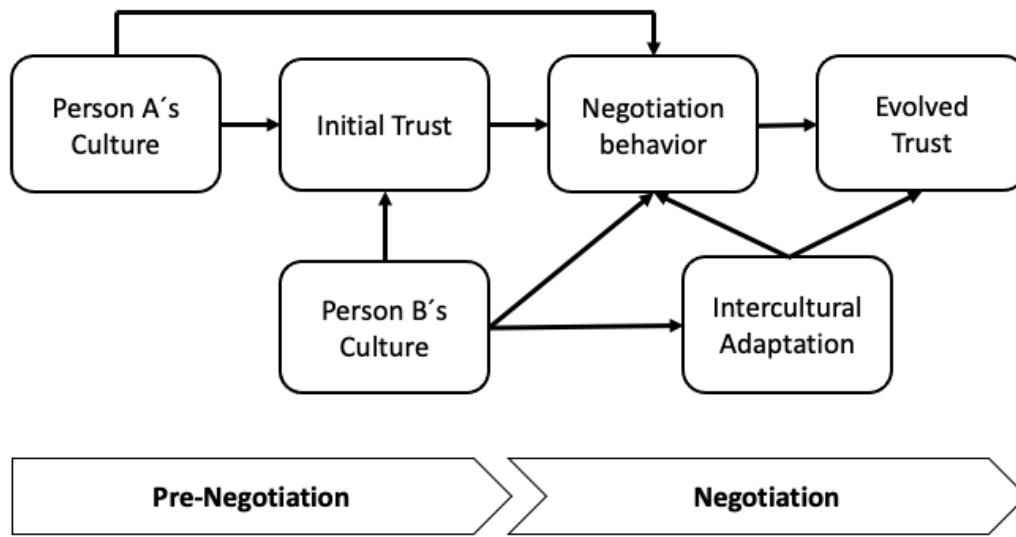
While high-trust, loose nations generally do not reduce their trust levels toward out-group members, high-trust, tight nations tend to adjust their trust levels compared to low-trust nations, as shown by the WVS data in Appendix C. This adjustment occurs because, in intercultural negotiations, individuals cannot expect their counterparts strictly to adhere to their social norms and expectations. Consequently, interpersonal trust becomes crucial, as individuals cannot rely on institutional trust (Brett, 2007; Gunia et al., 2011). Therefore, individuals from high-trust, tight cultures may place a greater importance on establishing a trustful relationship compared to those from high-trust, loose cultures. This is also because interactions with out-group members can create uncertainty (Pekerti & Thomas, 2003). While uncertainty exists in all relationships, it increases when people from different cultures meet (Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996). Therefore, the model incorporates both Person A´s culture and Person B´s (the counterpart´s) culture, as the initial trust level varies not only based on Person A´s culture but also on the cultural context – specifically, whether the counterpart is perceived as a member of the in-group or out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Intercultural negotiations are typically characterized by a low-trust climate, at least at the beginning of interactions, until individuals get to know each other and reduce intergroup anxiety and prejudices (Stephan & Stephan, 1996, 2000). Intracultural negotiations tend to be marked by a higher-trust climate due to perceived similarity and reduced perceived threats.

Individuals bring their cultural values and norms into negotiations, as well as their expectations about the counterpart´s cultural assumptions and anticipated negotiation behaviors (Adair et al., 2009), and tend to adapt accordingly (Tinsley et al., 2002). Adair et al. (2009) suggest that assumptions that are made prior to the interactions are crucial. Thus, intercultural negotiations differ from intracultural ones, because of differences arising from assumptions, stereotyping and prejudices. Culture and the counterpart´s culture influence the trust level and affect the choice of negotiation behavior. If individuals develop stereotypes about the outgroup member that are negative, the interaction is anticipated to be unpleasant and the outgroup member is expected to be untrustworthy (Stephan et al., 1999). Consequently, limited knowledge about the outgroup member and their culture can heighten perceived threats, with individuals expecting dissimilarity (Stephan et al., 1999).

Personal interactions to get to know the other and potentially an adaptation toward the values and behavior of the counterpart, may reduce dissimilarity and perceived threats. If an individual assumes shared needs and goals with the counterpart, they act more cooperatively and adjust their attitude after perceiving similarity (Byrne, 1961; Evans, 1963; McGuire, 1968). According to SIT, individuals categorize themselves and others into groups, with differences becoming more salient in intercultural interactions, potentially leading to in-group bias. However, this bias does not result in out-group derogation, as in-group members are treated preferentially rather than with hostility toward out-group members (Allport, 1954; Brewer, 1999, 2017). As a result, trust is often reserved for the in-group, making it necessary to recategorize out-group members into an extended in-group through intercultural adaptation (Brewer, 1999; Hamley et al., 2020; Hitlin et al., 2021).

Various studies suggest that moderate adaptation is more successful than substantial adaptation. In the model, intercultural adaptation refers to efforts to alter communication styles, adjust differences in beliefs, and to modify negotiation behavior in order to reduce intergroup anxiety and increase perceived similarity. In line with this reasoning an appropriate adaptation can lead to the building of a trustful relationship.

One limitation of this review is the number of available studies. Although we used a systematic approach to prevent bias, our focus was primarily on published articles.

Most of the extant research relies on quantitative methodologies and is focused on Western and East Asian countries that represent high-trust cultures. Thus, research should extend to low-trust cultures to gain a fuller picture of the trust mechanisms. Additionally, the use of qualitative methodologies may be a potential for future research. As there is a lack of research on trust repair in an intercultural context, studying trust repair with the focus on low-trust cultures presents an intriguing avenue for future research.

Some studies do not explicitly consider a counterpart´s culture in their studies. As argued by Adair et al. (2009), negotiators think primarily intracultural and would not express their intercultural negotiation schemas when a salient cultural prime is absent. Therefore, further investigations are needed with an explicit consideration of counterpart´s culture. As it is suggested that uncertainty and prejudices can lead to the differentiation of trust levels between in-group and out-group members, it is crucial to consider if certain cultures tend to differ trust levels for specific regions and to consider adaptation as an important variable. Future research could also explore specific strategies for recategorizing out-group members into an extended in-group across diverse cultural contexts.

Furthermore, extant research focuses on two-party negotiations. However, in practice frequently teams are involved in negotiations. Dinkevych et al. (2017) is one of the studies which examined the adaptation processes, while a solo negotiator meets a team. Solo negotiators tend to adjust their negotiation style to that of the counterpart´s team. The asymmetric setting needs further empirical testing. There are also limitations in research on the link between cultural intelligence and negotiation performance. There are only few studies that have delved into this specific area (e.g. Caputo et al., 2019; Imai & Gelfand, 2010; Groves et al., 2015). Research should also focus on the long-term effects of trust building and trust repairing strategies.

Conclusion

In summary, this review highlights the critical role of trust in intercultural negotiations. Trust is essential for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes but is complicated by cultural

differences. Consequently, negotiators need to understand and effectively manage these differences to enhance negotiation success. While trust building and establishing personal relationships are crucial in regions like Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, South and Central Asia, other regions focus more on professional relationships and task-oriented goals. Furthermore, it is essential to consider that most cultures tend to vary their trust level toward members of foreign cultures. Experience in different cultures and thorough preparation before intercultural negotiations can support successful interactions. Open-mindedness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural intelligence are important traits and skills that enable individuals to adapt appropriately in intercultural interactions. This emphasizes the importance of adaptive negotiation strategies in today's globalized business environment.

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Appendix A

Review Protocol

	Literature search
Identification	Records identified from: Scopus (n = 15,438) Web of Science (n = 4,863) ← **Search term group 1:** Cultur* OR Intercultural OR inter-cultural OR cross-cultural **Search term group 2:** (AND) Negotiat* OR bargain* **Inclusion/exclusion criteria:** Language, document type, research/subject area
Screening process	Records: Scopus (n = 7,751) Web of Science (n = 2,522) ← **Adding Search term group 3:** (AND) adapt* OR adjust* OR alter* OR differ* OR change OR chang* OR intracultural OR intra-cultural OR trust Records: Scopus (n = 949) Web of Science (n = 428) ← **As a result of keyword analysis:** **Adjusting Search term group 3:** (AND) adaptation OR intracultural OR intra-cultural OR intra* OR trust Records: Scopus (n = 485) WoS (n = 257) Excluded duplicates and merged to (n = 602) ← **Inclusion/exclusion criteria:** Journal Rankings and Topical Specialization (-277 Scopus), (-80 WoS); excluding all articles related to Migration, Immigration, Acculturation, Health, Illness, Coping, Well-being, Wsexuality, and Violence (-187 Scopus), (-91 WoS) Records resulting after abstract and title reading (n =111) ← **Abstract and title reading** of 602 articles. Exclusion criteria: Missing relevance to answer the research questions (intra- vs. intercultural differences, trust in the context of cross-cultural negotiations)
Final review sample	Unique articles for data extraction (n = 48) ← Studies included for full-text analysis 111: - reducing due to missing relevance criteria of answering the research questions (-74) - Forward and backward citation analysis (+11)

Appendix B

Data Extraction Form

Author(s)	Year	Methodology	Methods	Countries	Regions	Theoretical Model/Framework/Cultural Dimension(s)	Focus	Findings
Adair, W. L.	(2003)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, Russia, Sweden, Thailand, USA	The West, East Asia	Theory of interpersonal adaptation (Patterson, 1983), Anxiety uncertainty management theory of cross-cultural adaptation (Gudykunst 1985), Hall´s (1976) high context vs. low context cultures	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Individuals from high-context cultures adapt communication styles in intercultural interactions.
Adair, W. L., Okumura, T., & Brett, J. M.	(2001)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	Japan, USA	The West, East Asia	High context vs. low context cultures, Individualism vs. collectivism, Hierarchy vs. egalitarianism	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Japanes negotiators adapt their communication styles when negotiating with US counterparts.
Adair, W. L., Taylor, M. S., & Tinsley, C. H.	(2009)	Quantitative	Survey	Japan, USA	The West, East Asia	Social cognition (social schema theory) (Fiske & Taylor, 1991)	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Negotiators adapt their behavior in intercultural contexts according to their assumptions about the counterpart´s intracultural negotiation schema.
Adler, N. J., & Graham, J. L.	(1989)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	Canada, Japan, USA	The West, East Asia	Acculturation theory, similarity-attraction theory, reciprocity and interactional synchrony	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Negotiation behavior is adapted in intercultural contexts.
Alon, I., & Brett, J. M.	(2007)	Qualitative	Analysis of oral and written texts	Arabic speaking Islamic Countries	The West, The Middle East	N/A	Trust (Intercultural)	It takes more time to build a trustful relationship in the Middle East as opposed to Western countries.
Alteren, G., & Tudoran, A. A.	(2019)	Quantitative	Survey	Norway	The West	The relational paradigm (Relational contracting theory)	Trust (Intercultural)	Open-mindedness and adaptability are essential for building trust.
Banai, M., Stefanidis, A., Shetach, A., & Özbek, M. F.	(2014)	Quantitative	Survey	Israel, Kyrgyzstan	The Middle East/The West, Central Asia	Ethics position theory, horizontal and vertical collectivism vs. individualism (Triandis, 1995)	Trust (Intracultural)	A higher trust propensity does not necessarily reduce the use of ethically questionable negotiation tactics.
Brett, J. M., Gunia, B. C., & Teucher, B. M.	(2017)	Conceptual	Theoretical paper	N/A	The West, South Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, Latin America	Cultural levels of trust, cultural tightness-looseness, holistic vs analytic mindset	Trust (Intracultural)	Framework integrating trust, tightness-looseness, and analytic and holistic mindset.
Brett, J. M., & Mitchell, T.	(2020)	Qualitative	Interviews	Severa countries worldwide	The West, South Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, Latin America	Framework of cultural levels of trust and cultural tightness and looseness.	Trust (Intracultural)	Managers across cultures vary in how they apply key actions and criteria to determine trustworthiness.
Brett, J., & Okumura, T.	(1998)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	Japan, USA	The West, East Asia	Individualism vs. collectivism, Hierarchy vs. egalitarianism	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Indirect evidence for differing communication behaviors, which lead to misunderstandings and lower joint gains in intercultural contexts.
Calantone, R. J., Graham, J. L., & Mintu-Wimsatt, A.	(1998)	Quantitative	Survey	Philippines	South Asia	Problem-Solving Approach	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Cultural context does not affect the Problem-Solving approach.
Cheng, J., Huang, Y., & Su, Y.	(2018)	Quantitative	Multisession simulation	Australia (participants with different cultural backgrounds)	The West	RSC, Relational commitment, Relational capital	Trust (Intercultural)	Relational self-construal increases relational capital, but impact weakens in intercultural contexts.

Author(s)	Year	Methodology	Methods	Countries	Regions	Theoretical Model/Framework/Cultural Dimension(s)	Focus	Findings
Elahee, M., & Brooks, C. M.	(2004)	Mixed methods	Survey and in-depth interviews	Mexico	Latin America	N/A	Trust (Intercultural)	Mexican negotiators tend to trust out-group members less than in-group members, influencing their use of ethically questionable negotiation tactics.
Elahee, M. N., Kirby, S. L., & Nasif, E.	(2002)	Quantitative	Survey	Canada, Mexico, USA	The West, Latin America	Collectivism vs. individualism High context vs. low context Uncertainty avoidance Power distance	Trust (Intercultural)	Mexicans are more competitive toward US-Americans and Canadians than toward their in-group members, while US-Americans and Canadians show no significant variation.
Francis, J. N. P.	(1991)	Quantitative	Experiment (scenario based written manipulation)	Japan, Korea, USA	The West, East Asia	Social identity theory, Similarity-attraction theory, Collectivism vs. individiualism	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Moderate cultural adaptation is recommended for intercultural negotiations.
Gunia, B., Brett, J., & Nandkeolyar, A.	(2014)	Conceptual	Theoretical paper	N/A	N/A	N/A	Trust (Intracultural)	Trust levels vary across cultures, so strategies should be adapted in intercultural negotiations.
Gunia, B. C., Brett, J. M., & Gelfand, M. J.	(2016)	Review	Literature review	N/A	N/A	N/A	Inter- vs. Intracultural	This review highlights the need for further intercultural research.
Gunia, B. C., Brett, J. M., Nandkeolyar, A. K., & Kamdar, D.	(2011)	Quantitative	1. study: Survey 2. and 3. study: Negotiation simulation	India, USA	The West, South Asia	Cultural tightness and looseness Hight-trust vs. low-trust	Trust (Intracultural)	Intracultural studies focusing on Americans and Indians, examining cultural differences in trust propensity and negotiation strategies.
Kern, M. C., Lee, S., Aytug, Z. G., & Brett, J. M.	(2012)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	Korea, USA	The West, East Asia	Social awareness, social distance, communication theory	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Bicultural negotiators are believed to have better skills in building bridges in intercultural negotiations.
Kim, P. H., Dirks, K. T., & Cooper, C. D.	(2009)	Conceptual	Theoretical paper	USA	The West	N/A	Trust (Intracultural)	The efforts of the trustee and the willingness of the trustor to accept them are essential for succesfully repairing trust.
Kim, P. H., Ferrin, D. L., Cooper, C. D., & Dirks, K. T.	(2004)	Quantitative	Experimental design	USA	The West	N/A	Trust (Intracultural)	Denials and apologies impact trust repair differently.
Kong, D. T., Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L.	(2014)	Quantitative	Meta-analysis	N/A	N.a.	Social exchange theory	Trust (Intracultural)	Trust is positively related to cooperative behavior and joint gains. Individual gains decrease with integrative behaviors and increase with distributive behaviors.
Kong, D. T., & Yao, J.	(2019)	Conceptual	Theoretical paper	N/A	N.a.	N/A	Trust (Intercultural)	The effectiveness of negotiation strategies for building trust differs between intra- to intercultural settings.
Lee, K.-H., Yang, G., & Graham, J. L.	(2006)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	China, USA	The West, East Asia	N/A	Trust (Intercultural)	Tension lowers trust but boosts agreement for Chinese and reduces it for Americans.
Lituchy, T. R.	(1997)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	Japan, USA	The West, East Asia	Social identity theory, The Dual-Concern Model, Collectivism vs. Individualism	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Distributive outcomes in intercultural negotiations between Japanese and US-Americans.
Liu, L. A., Friedman, R., Barry, B., Gelfand, M. J., & Zhang, Z.-X.	(2012)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	China, USA	The West, East Asia	Dynamic constructivist theory of culture	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Mental models, driven by epistemic and social motives, influence consensus building in intercultural negotiations.
Lopez-Fresno, P., Savolainen, T., & Miranda, S.	(2018)	Qualitative	2 case studies (auto-ethnographic and interview methods)	Countries from Asia, Europe and Latin America	The West, Latin America, Asia	N/A	Trust (Intercultural)	Negotiation strategy can result in trust or distrust and affects negotiation success.

Author(s)	Year	Methodology	Methods	Countries	Regions	Theoretical Model/Framework/Cultural Dimension(s)	Focus	Findings
Luegger, K., Geiger, I., Neun, H., & Backhaus, K.	(2015)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	China, Germany	The West, East Asia	Triangle hypothesis, Assertiveness and humane orientation	Inter- vs. Intracultural	Germans exhibit more distributive behavior when moving from an intra- to an intercultural context.
Maddux, W. W., Kim, P. H., Okumura, T., & Brett, J. M.	(2011)	Quantitative	1. Survey 2. Experimental study	Japan, USA	The West, East Asia	Individual agency culture vs. collective agency culture	Trust (Intracultural)	Cultural differences affect the meaning and effectiveness of apologies and denials in trust repair.
Mandjak, T., Belaid, S., & Naude, P.	(2019)	Qualitative	Interviews	Tunisia	The Middle East	IMP interaction approach	Trust (Intracultural)	Trust develops over time (from perceived trust to experienced trust).
Mintu-Wimsatt, A., Garci, R., & Calantone, R.	(2005)	Quantitative	Survey	Philippines, USA	The West, South Asia	High context vs. low context, Uncertainty avoidance Individualism vs. Collectivism	Trust (Intracultural)	Perception of a counterpart´s cooperativeness is positively related to cooperative behavior. While the propensity to trust positively influences cooperative behavior among US Americans, it does not have the same effect for professionals from the Philippines.
Mislin, A. A., Campagna, R. L., & Bottom, W. P.	(2011)	Quantitative	Experimental design	USA	The West	Contract theory, Theory of emotional contagion, AIM (Affect Infusion) model	Trust (Intracultural)	Trust-building supports the succesful implementation of negotiated agreements. Additionally, small talk enhances perceptions of trustworthiness, which in turn promotes future collaboration.
Natlandsmyr, J. H. & Rognes, J.	(1995)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	Mexico, Norway	The West, Latin America	Masculinity vs. femininity, Power distance, Uncertainty avoidance, Collectivism vs. individiualism	Inter vs. Intracultural	Culture influences integrative outcomes in negotiations but has no effect on the distribution between negotiators.
Naquin, C. E., & Paulson, G. D.	(2003)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	USA	The West	N/A	Trust (Intracultural)	Face-to-face negotiations foster higher levels of interpersonal trust compared to online negotiations via e-mail. Additionally, online negotiators express less desire for future interactions with the other party.
Pekerti, A., & Thomas, D.	(2003)	Quantitative	Experimental design	New Zealand (Pakeha, East and Southeast Asians)	The West, South Asia, East Asia	Sociocentric vs. idiocentric communication styles	Inter vs. Intracultural	Inter- and intracultural communication styles differ significantly, with intracultural styles often becoming exaggerated in intercultural contexts.
Pornpitakpan, C.	(1999)	Quantitative	Experiment (scenario based written manipulation)	Japan, Thailand, USA	The West, East Asia	Social identity theory, Similarity-attraction theory, Collectivism vs. individiualism	Inter vs. Intracultural	While greater adaptation tends to be more favorable in this context, generally, a moderate level of adaptation is recommended.
Ramirez-Marin, J. Y., Barragan Diaz, A., & Guzman, F. A.	(2022)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation, Experimental scenario studies	France, India, (China)	The West, South Asia	EASI theory, Dual Concern Model	Inter vs. Intracultural	Angry opponents in intercultural negotiations tend to secure larger concessions, while happy counterparts in intracultural settings achieve larger concessions. The intentions to compromise or yield mediate these effects.

Author(s)	Year	Methodology	Methods	Countries	Regions	Theoretical Model/Framework/Cultural Dimension(s)	Focus	Findings
Ribbink, D., & Grimm, C. M.	(2014)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	USA (40% of participants with diverse cultural background)	The West, East Asia, South Asia, Latin America	Relational View, Transaction Cost Economics, High-context vs. low-context	Trust (Intercultural)	Intercultural negotiations result in lower joint gains. Higher trust increases joint profits in same-culture dyads, but its impact varies across cultural contexts.
Thanetsunthorn, N., & Wuthisatian, R.	(2019)	Quantitative	Empricial analysis	Data from 46 countries	Worldwide	Hofstede´s cultural dimensions (6)	Trust (Intracultural)	Findings indicate that individualistic and long-term oriented cultures tend to promote higher levels of trust, while cultures with high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance tend to exhibit lower levels of trust.
Tse, D. K., Francis, J., & Walls, J.	(1994)	Quantitative	Scenario judgement method with experimental design	Canada, China	The West, East Asia	Rational decisionmaking model, Collectivism vs. individualism	Inter vs. Intracultural	No differences in the use of negotiation strategies between intra- and intercultural settings.
Vasilyeva, E., Bultseva, M., & Lebedeva, N.	(2023)	Quantitative	Survey	Russia	Asia	Face negotiation theory	Inter vs. Intracultural	Face concerns differ between intra- and intercultural settings: self-face or mutual-face in intracultural, and mutual-face in intercultural contexts.
Weck, M. & Ivanova, M.	(2013)	Qualitative	Interviews	Finnland	The West	Dwyer et al.´s (1987) phases of relationship development	Trust (Intercultural)	Stereotype-free cultural adaptation generally enhances business relationships and increases trust.
Wu, J., & Laws, D.	(2003)	Qualitative	Case study	Argentina, Russia	Latin America, Asia	Theory of self-esteem, Klein´s object relations theory	Trust (Intercultural)	Negotiators can mitigate Other-anxiety through reflection, understanding, and acts of kindness, improving negotiation outcomes.
Yang, Y., De Cremer, D., & Wang, C.	(2017)	Quantitative	Negotiaion scenario	China, USA	The West, East Asia	N/A	Inter vs. Intracultural	The use of ethically questionable negotiation tactics varies between intra- and intercultural contexts.
Yao, J., & Brett, J. M.	(2021)	Quantitative	Survey	58 nations	The West, East Asia, South Asia, Latin America	Dynamic constructivist theory of culture, Holistic and analytic mindset, Face norms	Trust (Intracultural)	Cultural factors like face norms and mindset influence whether national-level societal trust can predict individual-level trust.
Yao, J., Brett, J., Zhang, Z., & Ramirez-Marin, J.	(2021)	Quantitative	1. Meta-analysis 2./3. Negotiation simulation	China	East Asia	Theory of MIOs	Trust (Intracultural)	Low-trust negotiators can use multi-issue offer strategies to gain insights and generate joint gains.
Yao, J., & Storme, M.	(2021)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	France	The West	Social exchange theory	Trust (Intracultural)	Negotiators´ trust and outcome satisfaction are positively linked to trust change after negotiation, while relationship satisfaction is positively associated with trust change over time.
Zhang, J.-D., Liu, L. A., & Liu, W.	(2015)	Quantitative	Negotiation simulation	China, USA	The West, East Asia	Collectivism vs. individualism, Affect- and congnition-based trust	Trust (Intracultural)	Chinese: Cognition-based trust reduces the use of deception; affect-based trust increases the use of informational deception. US: Affect-based trust reduces the use of emotional deception.

Appendix C

Trust Scores

Nation	Wave of Trust data collection	Trust reluctance		Do not trust at all: People you meet for the first time		Do not trust at all: People of another nationality		Do not trust at all: Your neighborhood		Trust differentiation out-group/in-group members in %**
		in %	Ranking*	In %	Ranking*	In %	Ranking*	In %	Ranking*	
Algeria	6	61,4	37	50,2	8	42,2	10	14,5	9	-27,7
Andorra	7	48,7	52	25,4	49	9,4	60	9,4	18	0
Argentina	7	57	44	22,9	52	12	56	4,6	42	-7,4
Armenia	7	82,9	11	42,1	14	35,7	19	10,5	15	-25,2
Australia	7	2,1	73	11,6	69	3,8	71	3,5	52	-0,3
Bangladesh	7	74,1	22	35,2	29	36,8	16	0,7	78	-36,1
Belarus	6	27,3	61	29,6	37	16,4	48	6,2	29	-10,2
Bolivia	7	82	13	61	2	51	3	25,4	1	-25,6
Brazil	7	85,1	9	44,9	11	30,1	24	18,9	6	-11,2
Canada	7	6,6	72	9,4	72	2,5	77	2,7	57	0,2
Chile	7	72,1	25	26,7	45	15,7	52	7,4	23	-8,3
China	7	-27,8	80	19,2	60	26	32	0,7	78	-25,3
Colombia	7	91	4	46,4	10	36,6	17	19,1	5	-17,5
Cyprus	7	84,4	10	42,3	13	22	38	6	30	-16
Czechia	7	25,7	64	16,2	64	14,7	54	3,4	53	-11,3
Ecuador	7	86,5	7	61,2	1	44,8	8	20,2	4	-24,6
Egypt	7	85,1	8	30,2	33	33,2	21	2,6	58	-30,6
Estonia	6	19,3	67	25,1	50	8,1	61	5,6	34	-2,5
Ethiopia	7	75,9	19	20,5	57	36,9	15	3	56	-33,9
Finland	5	-17,5	76	8,6	74	5,1	69	2,4	59	-2,7
Georgia	6	81,6	14	22,7	53	11,2	57	1,4	72	-9,8
Germany	7	7,8	70	15,6	65	5,2	68	2	68	-3,2
Great Britain	7	7,7	71	9,5	71	1,9	79	2,4	59	0,5
Greece	7	82,2	12	39,5	19	29,7	26	7,3	24	-22,4
Guatemala	7	64	35	36,6	26	25,6	34	13,2	10	-12,4
Hong Kong SAR	7	26,7	63	13,8	66	6,6	66	4	48	-2,6
Indonesia	7	90,7	5	51,8	7	37,7	13	5,4	36	-32,3
Iran	7	70,2	28	37,2	25	36	18	7,6	22	-28,4
Iraq	7	75,8	21	38,6	22	37,7	13	5,3	37	-32,4
Israel	4	51,7	49							
Japan	7	27,3	61	21,4	56	9,9	59	4,1	47	-5,8
Jordan	7	67,6	32	29	40	21,5	39	6,3	28	-15,2
Kazakhstan	7	49,8	51	38	24	17,2	46	7	26	-10,2
Kenya	7	79,9	17	38,1	23	29,7	26	7,7	21	-22
Kyrgyzstan	7	73,6	23	30,2	33	21,3	42	4,5	43	-16,8
Kuwait	6	38,1	56	30,2	33	18,3	45	3,1	55	-15,2
Lebanon	7	80,2	15	35,8	27	29,8	25	6,8	27	-23
Libya	7	80,1	16	35,8	27	35,7	19	4,5	43	-31,2
Macau SAR	7	11,8	69	8,4	76	6,8	65	2,2	65	-4,6
Malaysia	7	60,8	38	29,4	38	16,8	47	2,2	65	-14,6
Maldives	7	56,7	45	49,7	9	27,5	30	5,9	31	-21,6
Mexico	7	78,9	18	56,4	5	45,5	7	15,1	7	-30,4
Mongolia	7	47,7	53	27,8	43	40	12	3,9	49	-36,1
Morocco	7	67	33	28,8	41	23,8	35	7,2	25	-16,6
Myanmar	7	69,8	30	24,1	51	46	6	9,3	19	-36,7
Netherlands	7	-20,3	78	5,7	79	2,7	75	2,4	59	-0,3
New Zealand	7	-18,1	77	7,9	77	3,2	73	1,2	75	-2
Nicaragua	7	91,6	2	58,1	4	54	1	24,9	2	-29,1
Nigeria	7	73,4	24	34,9	30	30,2	23	11,9	13	-18,3
Northern Ireland	7	19,9	66	12,5	68	3,3	72	2,3	62	-1
Norway	5	-48	81	5,8	78	2	78	1	76	-1
Pakistan	7	52,6	48	39,6	18	48,6	5	9,6	17	-39
Palestine	6	57,6	42	39,2	20	42	11	5,1	38	-36,9
Peru	7	91,4	3	58,7	3	50,7	4	23,9	3	-26,8
Philippines	7	89,2	6	21,7	55	21,4	41	2	68	-19,4
Poland	6	53,4	47	16,9	63	5,5	67	4,3	46	-1,2
Puerto Rico	7	63,7	36	39,2	20	16,1	51	13	11	-3,1
Qatar	6	57,1	43	27,3	44	7,8	63	4,7	40	-3,1
Romania	7	75,9	19	40,8	17	25,8	33	13	11	-12,8
Russia	7	51,5	50	30,4	32	19,8	43	5,7	33	-14,1
Saudi Arabia	4	-5,8	74							
Serbia	7	65,7	34	25,6	47	15,4	53	4,7	40	-10,7
Singapore	7	30,5	60	19,7	58	7,3	64	1,7	71	-5,6
Slovakia	7	55,6	46	19,4	59	16,3	49	2,1	67	-14,2
Slovenia	6	59,2	39	33,4	31	16,2	50	5,9	31	-10,3
South Korea	7	34,2	59	22,4	54	22,3	37	1,4	72	-20,9
Spain	6	59	40	12,6	67	10,9	58	3,6	51	-7,3
Sweden	6	-22,9	79	10,9	70	2,6	76	5	39	2,4
Switzerland	5	-7,4	75	8,5	75	2,8	74	1,9	70	-0,9
Taiwan ROC	7	38,4	55	8,9	73	8	62	1,4	72	-6,6
Tajikistan	7	58,8	41	53,3	6	51,6	2	3,9	49	-47,7
Thailand	7	36,7	58	26,7	45	23,3	36	0,8	77	-22,5
Tunisia	7	69,4	31	29,3	39	28,7	29	7,8	20	-20,9
Turkey	7	70,1	29	28,5	42	21,5	39	3,4	53	-18,1
Ukraine	7	37,2	57	25,6	47	14,2	55	4,4	45	-9,8
United States	7	25,5	65	17,7	62	4,6	70	5,6	34	1
Uruguay	7	70,4	27	43,6	12	27,1	31	14,9	8	-12,2
Venezuela	7	71,6	26	42,1	14	30,5	22	9,8	16	-20,7
Vietnam	7	44,6	54	18,8	61	19,6	44	2,3	62	-17,3
Yemen	6	18,3	68	29,7	36	42,9	9	2,3	62	-40,6
Zimbabwe	7	95,7	1	41,5	16	28,9	28	11,3	14	-17,6

*Sorting: Low-trust to high-trust

**Defined as in-group (your neighbourhood) – out-group (another nationality)

Data Sources: Wave 7: Haerpfer et al. (2022); Wave 4-6: Inglehart et al. (2014)

Behind the Scenes: Perceptions and Management of Conflict in Teams with Varying Levels of Virtuality and National Diversity

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Abstract

This study explores how individuals perceive and manage conflict in various team settings employing different degrees of virtuality and national diversity through a mixed-methods approach using 223 surveys and 23 semi-structured interviews of participants who completed a computer-based simulation. Utilizing the model of individualized conceptualization of conflict, the study found that individual and contextual factors play crucial roles together and shape team dynamics and conflict. The quantitative findings indicate that virtuality negatively influences team performance scores and highlight that individuals in fully virtual, highly diverse teams report the highest perceptions of conflict presence compared to other teams. The qualitative examination supports such findings by demonstrating that individuals in virtual team settings engaged in self-censorship behaviors that may contribute to conflict-related challenges. It also found that individual differences in cultural awareness, previous experience, personalities, leadership, and conflict management skills interplay with contextual factors, influencing and shaping how individuals perceive, conceptualize, and manage conflict. These interactions were discussed in relation to the study's statistically insignificant findings and their potential implications for the inconsistent findings of previous studies examining the role of virtuality and national diversity in team dynamics and conflict. This study advances the current understanding of conflict in multinational virtual teams by highlighting the importance of including individual-level data in understanding team conflict. It also makes a unique contribution by showing the benefits of employing the mixed-methods experimental design that provides a complete picture of team conflict and allows for a comparison of the varying degrees of virtuality and national diversity.

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Acknowledgement

Introduction

Teams have been considered a critical component of many successful organizations. During the past 30 years, communication technologies have become more sophisticated and numerous (Gibbs et al., 2017). These technological advances have led to new work teams, such as virtual and multinational teams (Schmidtke & Cummings, 2017). The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the use of communication technology and virtual collaboration in organizations (Xie et al., 2020). During the pandemic, 22 percent of all private sector jobs in the U.S. were either hybrid or fully remote (Dalton & Groen, 2022). Further, globalization brought about the rise of multinational corporations and active immigration. 18.1 percent of the U.S. civilian labor force comprises foreign nationals (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Teams nowadays are not only increasingly virtual (Meluso et al., 2020) but also diverse, comprising members from many national backgrounds. To be successful, individuals in teams need to be fluent in working in various team settings with different degrees of virtuality and national cultural differences.

Scholars have increasingly paid attention to conflict due to its roles in teams (Nesterkin & Poterfield, 2016). Conflict is an interactive process between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance (Rahim, 2002; Wilmot & Hocker, 2010). When it is constructively managed, conflict fosters open and honest communication and creativity by highlighting different perspectives (Esquivel & Kleiner, 1996). It also encourages team members to find the optimal decision, which may lead to higher team effectiveness (Bradley et al., 2015). Thus, it is crucial in the effectiveness and success of teams as one of the stages of team development (Pazos, 2012; Tuckman, 1965).

Many scholars note that virtuality and national diversity pose unique challenges to teams, often leading to conflict (Kramer et al., 2017; Han & Beyerlein, 2016). Conflict often arises from unmet expectations, so it is essential to build shared expectations to prevent destructive outcomes of conflict (Raines, 2023). However, when people work virtually with people from various countries, the use of communication technology alters the way that people are used to communicating and building relationships with each other, making it challenging to build shared expectations and negotiate with each other (Burgoon et al., 2011; Han & Beyerlein, 2016). People also tend to behave verbally and non-verbally in ways that reflect their cultures—"the subjective elements of individual cognitions in the form of perspectives, personality, values, beliefs, and attitudes" (Posthuma et al., 2006, p. 245). Individuals may have a different way of communicating and negotiating that reflects their national culture (Choi, 2016). The different communication styles, stemming from national diversity and virtual interactions, often lead to unmet expectations, contributing to conflicts and resulting in varying approaches to conflict resolution and negotiation. Therefore, both virtuality and national diversity have often been associated with conflict (Friedman & Currall, 2003; Hakonsson et al., 2016; Massey et al., 2003).

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Previous literature, however, has found inconsistent effects of virtuality and national diversity on conflict-related challenges and management (Caputo et al., 2023; Peñarroja et al., 2022). Previous studies have found positive, negative, and even no relationships between virtuality and conflict and conflict-related variables (Flus et al., 2023; Peñarroja et al., 2022; Shahzad, 2023; Ortiz de Guinea et al., 2012; Workman, 2007; Staples & Zhao, 2006). They also found inconsistent relationships between national diversity and conflict-related variables (Stephens et al., 2021; Kankanhalli et al., 2006; Stahl et al., 2010; Brandes et al., 2009; Umans et al., 2008; Gibson & Gibbs, 2006). To reconcile such findings, this study utilizes the model of individual conceptualization of conflict, which explains that people base their behavioral choices not solely on the nature and force of environmental influences but also on how they perceive and interpret them (Louis, 1977).

There are two reasons for this research to utilize this model. First, there is a need to explore the individual perceptions of conflict in studying team conflict. Recent studies have demonstrated the need to explore alternative methods to assess behavioral phenomena at a team level (Fisher et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2021; Podsakoff et al., 2014). Podsakoff et al. (2014) discussed potential data aggregation issues surrounding referent and measurement. Similarly, Fisher et al. (2018) have called for individual-level studies in human subject research, finding that the aggregated approach shows the variance in individuals up to four times larger within individuals than within teams. In the context of conflict, Jehn and her colleagues (2000, 2010) argued that individuals often have different perceptions and experiences of the same situation in organizations depending on personality (Bono et al., 2002; Barrick et al., 1998), their levels of power (Smith & Trope, 2006), social values (Liebrand et al., 1986), and one's impressions of others (Van Lange & Hulman, 1994).

Indeed, Jehn and Chatman (2000) found that individuals have asymmetric perceptions about the level of conflict. In the later study, Jehn and her colleagues (2010) coined the term "conflict asymmetry" to describe the degree to which individual group members perceive conflict may differ and how this asymmetry is associated with team functioning. Shah et al. (2021) extended the study of conflict asymmetry and further demonstrated how it is not feasible to aggregate conflict into a single statistical representation. They demonstrated that (1) there is a lack of shared perceptions in team conflict due to individual differences, rater noise, members' conflict roles, and different lived experiences and (2) this traditional approach cannot account for the different origins and trajectories of conflict. Therefore, scholars have called for future scholars to focus on individuals who are behaviorally, affectively, and cognitively involved in conflict (Shah et al., 2021; Korsgaard et al., 2014).

Second, while individual-level understanding is essential, it is also important to account for context in understanding team conflict (Caputo et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2017; Foster et al., 2015; Thomas, 1976; Van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016). Many previous studies have actively examined the contextual factors, such as virtuality and national diversity, using both the Input-Process-Outcome (IPO) and Input-Mediator-Outcome (IMO) approaches (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017; Gupta et al., 2023; Shoaib et al., 2022). They have found various factors, such as conflict management, self-reflection, and feedback, the fit between task and communication channels, physical dispersion, and ingroup integration to influence conflict in virtual teams (He et al., 2017; Klitmoller & Lauring, 2013; Paul et al., 2004; Stahl et al., 2010; Mortensen & Kinds, 2001). Such findings demonstrate the continued importance of accounting for contextual factors in understanding team conflict. Also, people analyze the context and situations to reassess their assumptions about others' intentions and adjust their expectations when perceiving their conflict (Louis, 1977). Therefore, it is vital to understand how internal factors (e.g., personality, experience)

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and external factors (e.g., team settings, environment) play crucial roles in conceptualizing and managing conflict.

As such, previous research highlights the need to account for both individual and contextual factors in understanding conflict. The model of individual conceptualization of conflict, discussed in the next section, integrates both dimensions to clarify inconsistencies in previous research and deepen our understanding of team conflict. Therefore, applying the framework and method, this research answers the following question: ***How do individuals perceive and manage conflict within teams characterized by varying levels of virtuality and national diversity?***

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation: Model of Individual Conceptualization of Conflict

The model of individual conceptualization of conflict explains an individual's conceptualization and management of a conflict episode through the interplay of individual and contextual factors (Louis, 1977). The current understanding of conflict in virtual multinational teams focuses on the role of background conditions (e.g., virtuality and national diversity) and conflict behaviors (e.g., conflict management) in the development and outcomes of conflict. In this mechanistic view, conflict behaviors are often attributed to external causes (Louis, 1977). However, as these early conflict scholars have noted, what is important in studying conflict is to understand how people think about and attach meaning to the conflict since this makes people behave in a certain way (Killman & Thomas, 1978; Thomas, 1976). People make decisions on their behaviors not only based on the nature and force of environmental influences but also on how they perceive and interpret them (Woodward, 1970). In other words, we need to focus more on how people perceive and manage conflict based on individual and contextual factors in the study of virtual multinational teams.

Noting the importance of individual and contextual factors, Louis (1977) developed a model of individual conceptualization of conflict. The internal factors are the individual's state and value/need set, such as experience, self-insight, self-identity, and needs. The external factors are the background conditions, such as the use of communication technology in virtual teams or nationally diverse team composition (Louis, 1977). These two factors influence how individuals process their initial frustration to more complex attribution and eventually conceptualize conflict. The conceptualization of conflict is characterized by experience symbolization, causal attribution, intentional attribution, context analysis, content analysis, and choice assessment (Louis, 1977). This means that when someone experiences a "feeling of frustration," which is considered part of the "experience symbolization" stage, people often look for the source of this feeling and make a "causal attribution" (Louis, 1977, p. 459). This attribution is intentionally used to explain past and future interactions. People then analyze their context or situational characteristics while adjusting their attributed intentions and building expectations about their outcomes. They also analyze verbal and nonverbal communication, sincerity, consonance, and intention to judge their situation (Louis, 1977). How people will react to the situation is involved throughout these processes. An individual's perception of the situation through their basic orientation of choice or causality determines their interpretation and behaviors. In other words, this model emphasizes the interaction between contextual and individual factors in how individuals conceptualize and manage their conflict.

This model can provide insights into how the exact two dimensions that recent scholars

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have called for attention may influence an individual's conceptualization and management of a conflict (Caputo et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2017; Korsgaard et al., 2014; Shah et al., 2021). It is particularly useful because it offers explanations of conflict using both individual and contextual factors instead of focusing only on team settings or individual differences like previous studies often have. It can also provide nuanced explanations of conflict through both individual and contextual factors and their potential interactions with each other. Therefore, applying this framework, this research explores how individuals perceive and manage conflict in teams employing varying degrees of virtuality and national diversity.

Resolving Inconsistent Effects of Virtuality and National Diversity on Conflict

What we know from previous studies on the effect of both virtuality and national diversity on conflict is limited since most previous studies have focused on the effect of only virtuality or national diversity on conflict or their impact solely on performance (Caputo et al., 2023). Even among the limited literature that examined both virtuality and national diversity, however, the effect remains unclear—some studies found negative effects of national diversity in virtual teams, while others have not (Caputo et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2017; Kankanhalli et al., 2006; Paul et al., 2004; Peñarroja et al., 2022; Stahl et al., 2010; Staples & Zhao, 2006). This research attributes these inconsistent findings to (1) the dichotomous examination of virtuality and national diversity and (2) theoretical frameworks of previous studies that fail to account for both individual and contextual factors.

To begin with, in studying virtuality and national diversity, many previous studies have often looked at virtuality and national diversity in dichotomous ways (Cowan et al., 2022; Furumo & Pearson, 2006; Staples & Zhao, 2006; Anderson & Hiltz, 2001; Takeuchi et al., 2013). They have studied comparisons between the extremes of no virtuality and the highest degree of virtuality (i.e., non-virtual vs. fully virtual teams) (Foster et al., 2015; Globeny, 2023; Schmidtke & Cummings, 2014). They have also studied between homogenous and fully diverse teams (Staples & Zhao, 2006). They have often omitted hybrid virtual (HV) teams or moderately diverse (MD) teams in their studies.

According to faultline theory, however, this omission may mean consolidating the differences among in-person, hybrid virtual, and fully virtual teams, as well as homogeneous, moderately diverse, and highly diverse teams, if the study was conducted as a field study. Faultline theory explains that multiple differences in attributes and configurations, such as ethnicity, gender, language, and nationality, may create a hypothetical dividing line in teams known as a faultline (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). This theory argues that faultlines can lead to subgroup formation, which may become the grounds for unmet expectations and contribute to conflict, ultimately detrimental to team cohesion and performance. An empirical study of this theory found that a moderate level of diversity is prone to more subgroup formation because the limited number of individual attributes increases the chances of alignment for a single but strong faultline that can completely divide a group in half (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). However, previous studies often analyzed virtuality and national diversity in a dichotomous manner, overlooking moderate levels. This oversight may have contributed to inconclusive findings. Therefore, this study includes moderate levels of virtuality and national diversity to examine their impact on conflict. Specifically, it operationalizes virtuality and national diversity in three levels and explores how they influence conflict.

Furthermore, this study identifies another source of inconsistency in the theoretical

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frameworks that overlook both individual and contextual factors. However, as previously noted, understanding conflict requires considering individual perceptions alongside broader contextual influences. The model of individual conceptualization of conflict addresses this need. Thus, this study applies it to examine these inconsistencies. Given the nature of this model, a mixed-methods design is particularly necessary to capture both individual and contextual dimensions. It allows researchers to gain individual-level understanding while analyzing contextual variables, as needed (Venkatesh et al., 2023). Additionally, this approach facilitates cross-validation and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, helping to reconcile previous research findings.

Methodology

Study Design

This study employs a mixed-methods design to capture the complex conflict dynamics in teams. The quantitative component enables this study to examine the contextual aspects of conflict, such as virtuality and national diversity, on team performance and individual perceptions of conflict presence. The qualitative component allows it to focus on individual aspects of the framework, such as how virtuality and national diversity influence individual perceptions of conflict and management and how individual differences may also play a role. By integrating these methods, the study not only triangulates the qualitative findings to enhance validity but also provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of conflict (Venkatesh et al., 2023).

This study uses an experimental design for two reasons. First, this design allows examining how different levels of virtuality and national diversity may be responsible for variations in the level of the dependent variable for the quantitative part of this research (Bryman, 2012). Second, to make comparisons, it is also critical to control the goals and tasks of the teams since challenges associated with virtuality and national diversity may vary depending on the goals and tasks of the teams (Staples & Cameron, 2005). The assigned task for participants was a computer simulation called "Leadership and Team Simulation: Everest V3," released by Harvard Business Publishing (Roberto & Edmondson, 2017). This exercise is designed for five to six people to simulate climbing Mount Everest. It assigns individuals a different role and gives them individual and collective tasks. There are six rounds of exercises in which participants must communicate and analyze relevant information distributed among team members. Three hidden challenges require participants to make collective decisions. To succeed, participants must negotiate and make decisions on how to distribute resources adequately and solve problems. Each round takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, totaling approximately 90 minutes of seat time. Including preparation and the time intervals between rounds, participants can take about 120 to 150 minutes to complete. This simulation was chosen because it provides participants with a similar experience to a real workplace and creates similar challenges that virtual teams often face, such as knowledge sharing and information distribution (Han & Beyerlein, 2016). It also does not alienate participants from various backgrounds.

This study defined virtuality as "the extent of face-to-face contact among team members (encompassing amount as well as frequency of contact)" (Fiol & O'Connor, 2005, p. 20). Each team was assigned to a different degree of virtuality from IP, HV, and FV teams. IP teams completed all six simulation rounds in person in the lab environment. HV teams completed three

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rounds of exercise virtually and three rounds in person, using their choice of communication methods in the lab environment. FV teams completed all six simulation rounds virtually outside the lab environment without interacting in person with their choice of communication methods. Once this setting was determined, individuals in the same setting were randomly grouped into a team. The roles were also randomly assigned to them, and each had its functions (e.g., doctors could give medicine, marathoners could read the weather, leaders could move to the next round, etc.). However, the leader role seemed to be considered seriously not only because the title carried weight but also because leaders could move everyone to the next round, forcefully if needed. This study allowed virtual team members to choose their preferred communication methods and time because organizations often permit employees to select communication methods according to their preferences (Men, 2015; Vercic & Spoljaric, 2020). However, in the later stage of this research, it was found that most participants chose to communicate via the electronic chatting function built into the simulation program, which allowed them to communicate synchronously both collectively and dyadically. Many did not browse for other communication options, such as videoconferencing and phone calls, although they were encouraged to do so. Thus, the limited choice of communication channels from participants is one of the limitations of this research.

While this study deliberately designated virtuality, it did not address the team composition since it tried to recruit nationally diverse participants to collect its samples. Also, this study measured the degree of diversity as the number of countries in a team as Brandes et al. (2009) and Umans et al. (2008). The team was considered homogenous when composed of individuals from the same country. The team was considered moderately diverse when composed of individuals from two to three countries. The team was considered highly diverse when composed of individuals from four to five countries.

Part 1: Online Survey Questionnaire

Sample

Using convenience and purposive sampling, this study recruited participants from two major Southeast U.S. universities (undergraduate and graduate students, both domestic and international) as well as other interested volunteers, to participate in this research. 230 participants from 29 countries participated in the simulation. They consisted of 44 teams. The average duration of stay in the U.S. for non-US participants was six years and five months. Of 230 participants, 223 (96.96%) participated in the online survey, although only 212 (92.17%) completed the entire survey. The sample consisted of 42.9% males and 56.6 % females, with 0.5% refusing to respond to this question. Young people participated in this survey the most, with 76.3% being between the ages of 18 to 25, followed by 14.7% of those who are aged between 26 and 35, the ages of 36 to 45, the ages of 45 to 55, and the ages of 56 to 65. Race and ethnicity were considered more diverse, with 58 percent identifying themselves as White, followed by 20.8% Blacks or African Americans, 9.4% Asians, and multi-racial. Only 5.2% identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. As expected from the study setting, 69.2 percent of participants (n = 146) had some college education, with no degree, followed by those who had 12.8% bachelor's degree, 9% associate degree, and master's degree, with the least both professional degree and doctorate.

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Variables

The variables investigated by this study were the team performance score and the individual perceptions of conflict presence. This study used team performance scores from the simulation program. The simulation program generated the team performance score based on achieved and total available team goals. This study also used the individual perceptions of the presence of conflict, which captures the participants' perception of the existence or absence of conflict within the team. 4 questions, such as "I did not have any conflict with any of my team members," "My team members did not have any conflict with each other," "Many members engage in "back-stabbing" in this group," "An unhealthy competitive attitude appears to be present among group members," were used to construct this variable. Followed by Dawes (2008) and Colman et al. (1997), the items were rescaled and reverse coded as needed. Cronbach's Alpha was 0.77, which is an acceptable level of internal consistency (DeVellis, 2003; Kline, 2005).

Data Analysis

The effect of virtuality and team diversity on team performance score was analyzed using a linear regression model at the team level, as these variables represent team-level data. Given the sample size, bivariate linear regression was used separately for each virtuality and team diversity variable without considering interactions. Although a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) could have been conducted, this study opted for bivariate regression to allow the flexibility of adding variables to test the model as needed. The data were aggregated for each team, and one outlier was removed to meet the model's assumptions.

The effect on individual perceptions of the presence of conflict was analyzed using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). In this analysis, the dependent variable is the ordinal variable, which assumes that a latent variable may exist. However, this method was chosen since it aligns with the theoretical framework of this study, allowing for a nuanced analysis of individual-level perceptions within the context of their teams. HLM is particularly suitable for this analysis as it accounts for the nested structure of the data, where individuals are nested within teams (Woltman et al., 2012). This approach enables the examination of team-level factors on individual-level factors, considering variability both within and between teams, aligning with the study's theoretical framework.

Part 2: Semi-structured Interviews

Sample

Participants who indicated an interest in a follow-up interview and provided their contact information during the online survey were contacted for the follow-up interview. Therefore, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with 23 participants from 16 teams. The interviews had an average duration of approximately 34 minutes. The author of this article conducted all interviews privately, either via phone or in person, in a space chosen by the participants, such as a meeting room or a public area. Table 1 below describes the details of participants with their pseudonyms.

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Interview Guide and Procedure

A semi-structured interview guide guided the interviews. The questions included the participant's experiences with the challenges to team collaboration, conflict experiences, and strategies to handle them. It asked questions on norming behaviors, information flow, knowledge sharing, social distance, relationships among team members, comparison with traditional teamwork, feelings of detachment, conflict prevention and management, work time inefficiency, meeting schedules, distractions, and free-rider issues (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017; Han & Beyerein, 2016; Chou et al., 2013; Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Isotalo, 2013; Ayoko et al., 2012). These were

Table 1. *Details of Semi-Structured Interview Participants*

#	Pseudonyms	Country of Origin	Age	Gender	Role	Team	Degree of Virtuality	Degree of Diversity	Team Performance Score
1	Adam	USA	31	Male	Member	A	In person	Moderate	2
2	David	USA	28	Male	Member	A	In person	Moderate	2
3	Frances	USA	50	Female	Member	A	In person	Moderate	2
4	Benjamin	USA	19	Male	Leader	B	In person	Moderate	72
5	Chris	Cameroon	36	Male	Member	C	In person	High	69
6	Eric	Peru	46	Male	Leader	C	In person	High	69
7	Penny	USA	36	Female	Member	C	In person	High	69
8	Gregory	India	32	Male	Member	D	In person	High	63
9	Henry	USA	40	Male	Leader	E	Fully Virtual	High	44
10	Isabelle	USA	58	Female	Leader	F	In person	Homogeneous	33
11	Kelly	USA	50	Female	Member	F	In person	Homogeneous	33
12	Liam	USA	59	Male	Member	F	In person	Homogeneous	33
13	James	USA	21	Male	Member	G	Hybrid	Homogeneous	44
14	Matt	USA	21	Male	Member	H	Hybrid	Homogeneous	50
15	Nicole	South Korea	27	Female	Leader	I	Fully Virtual	High	63
16	Oliver	China	21	Male	Member	J	In person	High	19
17	William	Egypt	18	Male	Member	J	In person	High	19
18	Queenie	Cameroon	18	Female	Member	K	In person	High	72
19	Rick	USA	23	Male	Member	L	Hybrid	Homogeneous	48
20	Scott	Canada	24	Male	Leader	M	Hybrid	Moderate	35
21	Tom	UK	24	Male	Member	N	Hybrid	Moderate	30
22	Unique	USA	22	Female	Member	O	Fully Virtual	Moderate	24
23	Victor	USA	27	Male	Member	P	Hybrid	Homogeneous	48

the challenges that virtuality and national diversity pose in team collaboration, which this research identifies as associated with conflict. These questions were posed so that participants could focus on the contextual aspects of conflict for this study, emphasizing how these aspects were perceived as conflict episodes. The questionnaire was reviewed by a few experts in the field and is attached in Appendix A. As the nature of semi-structured interviews allows researchers to be more flexible, the order of the questions was changed depending on the interview, and some additional probe questions were asked. Each participant was interviewed once. It was audio recorded for transcription under the participants' agreements. The notes were taken during the interviews as well. The audio was transcribed by both the author and a professional transcription company, and analyzed by the author, without returning to the participants for verification.

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Data Analysis

Adopting a constructionist epistemology with a critical orientation, this study used reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Bryne, 2022) to identify and analyze patterns or themes in the data. Considering this epistemological stance, reflexive thematic analysis that emphasizes the active role of the researcher was deemed most appropriate (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This research took the recursive and iterative six-phase analytical process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2012). The process began with immersion in the data. Data was coded in relation to conflict and contextual aspects of conflict, following an inductive approach. Both semantic and latent coding were utilized. Semantic coding was utilized to present meaningful content communicated by participants. Latent codes were produced to identify the underlying assumptions or hidden meaning in relation to virtuality and national diversity. As Byrne (2022) describes, codes were created to capture the context and iterated to answer the research questions based on the model of individual conceptualization of conflict. These codes were gathered to build categories. Each category was contextualized, compared, and related to each other to integrate them (Bazeley, 2009). The recursive process of reviewing themes and defining and naming themes was followed. In doing so, constant comparisons were made among teams with differing degrees of virtuality and national diversity to identify patterns related to these two dimensions, as well as to examine how conflict was described and managed. The case initial code and iteration processes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Sample Quote and Coding Process*

Illustrative Quote	Preliminary coding	Iteration 1	Iteration 2
We d[i]n't want to offend [each other] because, like, having this diverse group helped, but at the same time, . . . maybe people are from different cultures, so we try to be very sensible. I don't want to ask you too many questions.	[1] Acknowledging cultural differences [2] Confusion between cultural awareness and cultural assumptions [3] Balancing frustration and intercultural sensitivity [4] Cultural assumptions leading to reduced communication	[1] Respecting cultural differences [2] Lack of understanding in cultural differences [3] Impact of cultural assumptions on communication [4] Cultural assumptions leading to conflict avoidance	[1] Embracing diversity benefits [2] Interplay of cultural awareness and assumptions [3] The role of cultural assumptions on communication and conflict management
I don't wanna look like I'm arrogant or something. Since it was a virtual setting, I didn't tell them what to do, but just kind of encouraged them to do it, like "Hey, we can do it and so on..." Like a good message or like checking up on other's health.	[1] Different expectation for virtual team [2] Motivation and encouragement [3] Concern for perceived arrogance	[1] Different expectation of leadership in virtual team [2] Lateral authority leadership [3] Underlying concern for miscommunication	[1] Different expectation in virtual team leadership [2] Influence of underlying concern for miscommunication in behaviors [3] Lack of psychological safety

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Results

Part 1: Quantitative Study

Table 3 presents the results of the bivariate regression model and HLM. The result indicates a statistically significant difference in team performance scores based on the level of virtuality. The average team performance score for in-person teams is 58.077. The average team performance score for hybrid virtual teams was 18.744 points less than in-person teams at a statistically significant level (p = 0.002). Also, the average team performance score for fully virtual teams was 15.855 points lower than in-person teams at the statistically significant level (p = 0.027). To compare the difference between HV and FV teams' scores, further analysis was

Table 3. *Summary of Bivariate Regression and HLM*

	Team Performance Score				Individual Perceptions of Conflict Presence		
	Estimates	SE	p		Estimates	SE	p
In-person[a]	58.077***	4.430	<0.001	FV-HD[a]	2.433***	0.289	<0.001
Hybrid Virtual	-18.744**	5.636	0.002	FV-MD	-0.806*	0.377	0.034
Fully Virtual	-15.855*	6.926	0.027	FV-H	-0.817*	0.356	0.023
				HV-HD	0.289	0.485	0.552
				HV-MD	-0.370	0.328	0.262
				HV-HD	-0.843**	0.312	0.007
				IP-HD	-1.067**	0.409	0.010
				IP-MD	-0.883**	0.325	0.007
				IP-H	-0.553	0.363	0.129
				Random Effects			
				σ^2			0.486
				$\tau 00_{TeamName}$			0.070
				ICC			0.126
				$N_{TeamName}$			44
Observations	43						212
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.224 / 0.186			Marginal / Conditional R^2			0.141 / 0.249

[a] reference category

conducted to calculate the difference between their coefficients and tested for significance. This analysis indicated no statistically significant difference in team performance scores between HV and FV teams. Team diversity was also analyzed using the same model. However, the adjusted R^2 indicated that it did not have explanatory power for team performance scores ($R^2 = 0.030$, Adjusted $R^2 = -0.018$). Therefore, this variable was omitted from the table. This result suggests that higher levels of virtuality are associated with a lower level of team performance, while diversity alone does not significantly influence team performance in this dataset.

The results of the hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) indicate that different levels of virtuality and diversity influence individual perceptions of the presence of conflict. Individuals in fully virtual and homogeneous and middle diverse, hybrid virtual homogeneous, and non-virtual highly diverse reported significantly lower perceptions of conflict than those who participated in fully virtual highly diverse teams (p < 0.05). However, people from hybrid virtual highly diverse, hybrid virtual moderately diverse, and in-person homogeneous teams did not perceive more or less

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conflict than those from fully virtual teams. The findings reveal that individuals in teams with higher virtuality may experience more challenges to team performance. These findings highlight that contextual factors are essential, indicating that virtuality and national diversity and its random effect in this model explain a moderate portion of the variability in the individual team members' conflict perceptions (Ozili, 2023). However, as the residual variance presents, there is notable variability in the perceptions of conflict between teams. The conditional R^2 also suggests that other unaccounted predictors may explain this variability in conflict. These indicate that substantial variability remains unexplained, suggesting it is worth exploring other influential factors, such as individual characteristics and specific team context, as suggested by the model of individualized conceptualization of conflict.

The above findings are meaningful in two ways. First, it provides a broad overview of how virtuality and national diversity influence team performance and individual perceptions of conflict. While virtuality negatively influenced team performance, national diversity did not influence team performance. However, it was interesting to see that when virtuality was involved together, it influenced individual perceptions of conflict. This means there may be potential for the interaction between virtuality and national diversity to influence team performance, although the limited team-level sample size did not allow for robust analysis in this study. Second, the result of HLM indicates the importance of exploring the influential factors to fully understand team phenomena. The within-team variance (σ^2) represents the potential roles of individual differences. The complex interaction between virtuality and national diversity may influence individual perceptions of conflict in various ways. This finding supports using a mixed-methods design to delve into the behind-the-scenes of team conflict and clarify the "why" and "how" dimensions of such relationships by examining individual-level data. Therefore, this research further explores the research question using the qualitative approach in the next section.

Part 2: Qualitative Study

Roles of Virtuality and National Diversity

Virtuality & Self-censorship Behaviors. Participants across all team settings reported the lack of clarity in team processes (i.e., individual and collective goals, decision-making processes, and communication protocols) as common reasons for conflict. This finding was not unexpected because the simulation was designed to create such conflicts. However, when comparing individuals in teams with different levels of virtuality, different perceptions and behaviors were found between those who participated in the simulation in person and those who participated in virtual teams: self-censorship behaviors.

Participants in hybrid and fully virtual teams often discussed how they changed how they interacted with each other (increased self-censorship) because they were working virtually. This means that participants wanted to say something to their team members or act a certain way but decided not to do so. They shared many incidents: "I could have said/done something, but I [did] not." For instance, Nicole (FV-HD team) stated that she altered her leadership behaviors since she was in virtual teams. She was afraid that she would sound "*arrogant*," so she framed her directions as questions and suggestions. Others also described similar stories of altering their behaviors or biting their tongue, although they felt that something was not going as they wanted.

When asked for the reason, participants shared a perspective that the goal of communication was to complete the simulation efficiently rather than spending time developing

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personal connections, understanding each other, and learning from the simulation. Interestingly, they similarly describe the implicit expectations of focused and efficient communication. This perception made them less likely to make small talk and build personal relationships with each other. Even if they wanted to discuss something related to a task, they avoided communication unless they deemed it important or urgent. This implicit interaction rule of efficiency made it hard for them not to "*go with the flow.*" Also, this often became the source of intrapersonal conflict about whether to discuss specific issues and interpersonal conflict due to the frustration associated with the lack of communication.

The increase in self-censorship behaviors also appeared to stem from a reduced expectation of future interactions. There was a general agreement among participants from across teams that their interaction focused on tasks and lacked relationship aspects of communication, which could be partly attributed to the short-term simulation. However, while participants from FV teams perceived the simulation activity as a "one-time deal," participants from HV and IP teams often saw the possibility of future interactions. This different perception influenced FV teams' interactions to be *"really strictly just [about] the simulation, and just chatting about that"* (Unique). Once they completed the work, they lauded "*Nice work*" to each other, and "*that was it*" (Henry). Participants did not have any motivation to have relationship-building communications. Their goal was solely to complete the project together with each other. On the other hand, participants in the HV and IP teams stated that they developed a level of rapport to greet each other in the future as someone who shared the simulation experience. Instead of perceiving it as a one-time relationship, they stated that they could not develop rapport due to the time constraints of the simulation exercise.

Those who participated in hybrid virtual teams could describe this different dimension since they both experienced both fully virtual and in-person settings. Victor (HV-H team) stated that people "*have a better sense of how to engage with that person, and you get a better idea of what is going on*" because "*there isn't any lacked communications.*" Similarly, Rick (HV-H team) shared this perspective:

> *[In fully virtual settings,] it was just, "Hey, let's just get this done." We're low on time. Let's try and make it as quick as possible. Once we were able to meet each other, and we could understand each other's personalities, I think that's what made it more fun. That's what made it more interactive with each other and that's where we sat down and said, "All right. Now we can breathe. Now we can take our time with this and figure out what we need to do." I think definitely building the rapport came through once we were actually able to get to see each other and get to know each other, meet each other and all that.*

As such, all participants from hybrid virtual teams (Teams G, H, L, M, N, and P) shared difficulties in virtual communication compared to in-person interactions. It was interesting to see that participants from hybrid virtual teams shared their challenges differently than others. They shared similar experiences in the implicit interaction rule of efficiency during their virtual interactions. However, they still left the simulation with a sense of rapport similar to the one described by participants in in-person teams, which highlights the uniqueness of hybrid virtual teams.

Additionally, although it is difficult to consider it a pattern, three participants (Matt, Scott, and Tom) from three hybrid virtual teams (Teams H, M, and N) raised another interesting point. Although all of them agreed that in-person interaction was more effective in terms of social interactions and communication, they believed that this change in modality did not affect their

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teams differently. Matt claimed that even after they met in person, everyone followed the same team procedure: "*[Everyone just made] sure that their health was okay, complet[ed] the task, and check[ed] for other things other than messages from the group.*" He thought that "*in-person communication did not change anything*" since his team "*ma[de] sure to communicate as quickly as possible*" whether in person or virtually. Indeed, among the interview participants, Matt's team (Team H) achieved the highest team performance score of all the six hybrid virtual teams. Scott and Tom shared a similar point. Scott argued that since his team members had already made decisions by themselves, even though they met in person, everyone was still confused about what to do, and the frustration continued at the same level. Tom also discussed similarly that it was too late by the time his team met in person since their team's energy level was already down. He said, "*Even when we got together, it was more of just like, 'Let's just go past it and [move onto the] next part.'*" In other words, they all agreed that the in-person interaction felt more personal and engaging. Nevertheless, the interaction rules established in a virtual environment persisted even after meeting in person, regardless of whether they were beneficial or harmful to the teams. This persistence of between-team differences, which will be discussed later, underscores the uniqueness of hybrid virtual teams by suggesting that dynamics established virtually can carry over into in-person interactions.

In conclusion, participants in teams with higher virtuality engaged in self-censoring behaviors that hindered open communication. This could be a potential reason for the statistical finding that virtuality negatively influences team performance. Additionally, participants in hybrid virtual teams displayed interesting team dynamics compared to in-person or fully virtual teams. These unique team dynamics of hybrid virtual teams may explain why the two team compositions from hybrid virtual teams, HV-HD and HV-MD, have not presented statistical differences from the individual perceptions of conflict presence of FV-HD teams.

No Cultural Differences or Not Recognized Differences As indicated by the statistical insignificance, most participants reported no observed cultural differences resulting from nationality, regardless of their team settings. When the question was asked, participants often answered this question by discussing how their team members were similar or dissimilar in their surface-level diversity, such as ethnicity, race, age, gender, and language (Eagleman, 2011; Phillips et al., 2006; Harrison et al., 1998). The only diversity they often reported was language in that they noticed differences in accents among themselves. Yet, they shared a perception that it still did not impact them working as a team or completing the task. In other words, they often discussed how this was not a challenge and did not play a role in their team experience.

For instance, participants in FV teams stated that they did not notice any cultural differences in this simulation despite being in HD and MD teams. Considering that these participants discussed that they preferred using the chat function within the simulation program as their preferred way of communication, it could have been that they might not have noticed the surface-level differences. However, even the interview participants who participated in IP and HV teams also reported that cultural differences did not influence their team dynamics. This study found interesting reasons for this.

To begin with, participants may not have communicated and recognized each other's nationalities. Indeed, although participants of this study were free to communicate their backgrounds with each other, they were not provided with any information about where everyone was from or whether their team was considered homogeneous, moderately diverse, or highly diverse. Therefore, if they had not communicated such background, it could have been difficult to attribute any conflict to nationality and its associated cultural differences, even though it could

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have affected their team interactions and conflict. For example, William (IP-HD team) stated that "*the only difference between us was our ability to speak English fluently. . . [this] did [not] affect the clarity of the words.*" When he discussed his team's conflict, he attributed it to a lack of clarity in team processes and that his team members did not listen to him, stating they did not want to "*spend more time trying to solve [his] problem.*" However, when he further described his conflict, the conflict seemed to arise due to his biases and stereotypes. He made a wrong assumption about another team member's national origin, and his teammate was offended.

> *The leader became agitated [with] me when I said that her home country is in Africa. I didn't understand her anger since it's okay to make mistakes. . . For the other problem, she was agitated because what I said could be considered stereotypical or racist because I believed it was in Africa, instead of South America. But, I still don't understand her problem because it's okay if people make mistakes about the location of your country. I believe she should benefit from having a more mature mind.*

The team leader was from France. Even at the time of the interview, however, William did not recognize that the conflict resulted from his stereotypes and biases on race. In interpreting the same conflict, Oliver, who was on the same team as William, attributed it to William's personality, describing that William's outspoken and straightforward attitudes about his needs were the reason for their team conflict. While this anecdote strengthens the previous theme on different perceptions and attribution of conflict in the same team, it also suggests that the participants' lack of recognition of each other's nationality could have contributed to the underreporting of associated cultural differences, even though such differences actively influenced team dynamics and contributed to conflict.

On the other hand, there was another group of participants who recognized national diversity in their teams but were mindful of attributing their challenges to cultural differences due to heightened awareness and the influence of social desirability bias. Participating in the simulation in higher education settings emphasizing cultural sensitivity, they appeared cautious about making generalizations. For instance, Adam (IP-MD team) stated, "*I don't know enough about the other cultures to be able to say definitively that culture played a factor.*" Nicole (FV-HD team) also stated, "*I think that was… that could be the personality issue or could be the cultural issue.*" Consequently, several participants expressed uncertainty, explicitly stating their inability to discern whether behaviors stemmed from individual personality or cultural backgrounds. This level of cultural awareness might have led them to refrain from attributing conflicts and challenges directly to cultural factors.

While most participants across the team settings did not recognize or report the role of culture in their team dynamics, five participants clearly recognized and reported the impact of national diversity on their teams. Existing literature suggests that conflict in diverse teams often stems from deep-level diversity, such as differences in values and beliefs or from stereotypes and biases (Harrison et al., 1998). These participants displayed a high level of awareness about cultural differences and acknowledged the potential impact of deeper-level diversity on their team dynamics. They referred to some of their team members' behaviors, such as team members' prioritization of individual or collective goals, inclusivity in checking in with everyone, and preferences for direct communication. They shared such observations through cultural dimensions, including individualism vs. collectivism, communication styles (direct vs. indirect), and conflict management strategies (competition vs. avoidance). This deep cultural understanding not only

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helped them attribute team conflicts and challenges to these cultural differences but also gave them the insights needed to manage and move forward in conflict situations effectively. Therefore, these participants seemed more confident in attributing their team dynamics to national cultural differences in the interviews.

Consequently, when it comes to national diversity, team-specific levels of communication and individual differences in cultural awareness seemed to play a crucial role in participants recognizing and attributing the other's behaviors to national cultural differences. When unaware of national diversity in teams, these participants might have acted as if they were homogeneous teams, which may be why national diversity alone did not influence team performance scores and individual perceptions of conflict. When aware of such diversity, these participants might have been careful and respectful to each other to prevent culture from creating conflict-related challenges and manage their conflict accordingly, attributing to the cultural differences. Accordingly, the qualitative findings not only provide explanations on the effect of national diversity in the quantitative part of this study but also the importance of accounting for how contextual and individual factors interplay in studying the role of national diversity in team conflict.

Within-Team and Between-Team Differences: The Role of Individual Differences in Conflict Experiences

Perceptions of Conflict Based on Personalities and Previous Experiences. According to the model of individual conceptualization of conflict, it is also crucial to account for the role of individual differences when studying conflict. Therefore, this study also examined how individuals are similar or different in their perceptions of conflict by analyzing 11 individuals in the same teams (Teams A, C, F, and J). It found that while participants similarly perceived "conflict" and topics surrounding such tensions, they showed different perceptions of presence and attributions of conflict depending on individual personalities and experiences.

To illustrate, in Team C, Chris, Eric, and Penny similarly discussed that their team had conflict surrounding the speed of decision-making and differences in communication style. However, they differed in whether it was considered conflict or not. Eric said he did not "*fe[el] any conflict.*" Chris stated that his team had no major conflicts, only conflicting ideas and minor disagreements. On the other hand, Penny perceived a major conflict, discussing that "*there was a point in time where someone got up and walked away, because she was a little miffed about how long we were taking to decide,*" which Chris and Eric did not even discuss. Likewise, Adam, David, and Frances from Team A similarly recognized that their team conflict resulted from assumptions about shared information and misunderstandings. However, in describing the level of conflict, David described his experience as having a "*communication conflict,*" while Adam and Frances described it as "*not having one.*"

Not only did participants differ in what constitutes a conflict, but they also showed different reasons for their conflict. Again, in Team C, Chris and Eric attributed their conflict to cultural differences. On the other hand, Penny attributed it to team members' miscommunication. Similarly, in Team A, Adam attributed their conflict to a lack of leadership from his team leader and the absence of ground rules. Frances, however, attributed it to the language barrier of their leader and the lack of clarity in their ground rules. Although Adam stated they did not have any ground rules, Frances stated that they had one, although it was not good enough. On the other hand, David attributed their conflict to the structure of the simulation itself, which he saw as a clash of self-interests. Similar patterns were also found in Team F and J in that team members shared similar

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observations regarding the conflict and tension surrounding a particular topic. However, they showed different understandings of what constitutes a conflict and what causes it.

Participants' experiences and personalities seemed to play roles in these differences. When discussing his conflict, Chris referred to his background as being from an African country. He shared that he thought the conflict was due to the different values among participants. In his perception, it was nothing personal but just different values. Thus, recognizing that it was the value differences, they "*agree[d] to disagree*," which was why he perceived that they only had a minor disagreement. In the case of Eric, he discussed that he has a professional background that deals with conflict in his daily life. This background seemed to give him confidence in dealing with conflict, which was why he said he did not sense any conflicts. On the other hand, unlike other participants who often discussed their previous experiences or personalities to make sense of their conflict experiences, Penny did not mention her previous experience or personality during the interview. However, her personality and preferences showed as she often stated, "*To me, that doesn't matter*," "*Who cares?*," "*It doesn't matter. You can call it whatever you want in your mind. For now, this is what the job is*." These statements showed her preferences in team efficiency as well as her preferences in conflict avoidance (Thomas & Killman, 1978). This preference could have led her to believe there was indeed conflict in her team, as opposed to Chris and Eric, who discussed moderate to no conflict in their same team. Consequently, the individual differences in previous experience and personalities explained the differences in how people perceived their conflict and causal attribution of the same conflict experience.

Conflict Management and Reflection Based on Leadership and Conflict Management Skills. While exploring the between-team differences, this study found two types of teams within similar virtual team settings: those who clearly discussed their teams' conflict management processes and those who did not. Participants from the former teams often discussed having a positive account of conflict and how they managed their conflict through the established process. On the other hand, participants from the later teams often discussed that their team could not resolve their conflict and shared a negative account of the conflict. This difference was observed in both in-person (Teams B, C, D, K vs. Teams A, F, J) and hybrid virtual teams (Teams P, L, H vs. Teams G, N, M), although such differences could not be analyzed in the fully virtual teams due to the small sample size. The effective conflict management process was consistently described by participants as follows: (a) building clear expectations, (b) using interest-based communication, and (c) following collective yet efficient procedures.

When participants were asked to describe their decision-making process and conflict, these participants shared that their team spent some time at the beginning of the simulation to discuss their expectations in terms of each other's needs, how to communicate with each other, and how to make decisions together. Even if its duration varied across teams, this discussion gave participants confidence about the expected behaviors from each other and a shared perception that the decisions were collectively made based on the ground rules. This clarification and confidence seemed to benefit their team process tremendously at the later stages of the simulation to prevent destructive conflict and manage conflict when it arose.

Teams with such effective conflict management processes also described their conflict communication as interest-based, aligning with the principled negotiation strategies discussed by Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2011). Interest-based communication emphasizes the "why" aspect of conflict rather than the "what" or the specific positions, allowing participants to uncover information, knowledge distribution, and incompatible goals built into the simulation. In contrast, teams without the process focused their communication on "what" decisions should be made.

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Therefore, instead of uncovering the distributed knowledge information that simulation set them up for conflict, they gravitated towards avoidance or confrontation rather than finding the optimum solution, creating frustration toward each other. They ended up with everyone "*doing [their] own things*."

In addition, teams with effective conflict management processes also perceived their teams as making collective decisions efficiently, attributing this to their leaders' behaviors. Interestingly, "good leaders" came into the picture here, although the leader role was assigned randomly. Participants from teams with the process seemed satisfied with their leaders. They described that their leaders initiated the process by asking questions to include everyone's opinions while helping them focus on the agenda. They would gently prompt with questions like, "Okay. What is next?" or invite participation by saying, "Let's do this next." On the other hand, participants from teams without an effective conflict management process often discussed how their leaders' behaviors differed from their expectations. They described their leaders as "*not in the leading mindset*" (James, HV-H team), noting that leaders often made decisions without giving participants a chance to discuss the topic thoroughly. These leaders either imposed their decisions on the team or dwelled on one topic without deciding. The lack of clear and efficient decision-making processes frustrated team members and provoked conflict. Moreover, when conflict arose, no one was able to resolve it. Thus, these participants perceived "good" leaders as those who initiated collective decision-making and as efficient in breaking stalemates.

Gregory (IP-HD team) statements below briefly describe such an effective process:
Before we started, we made sure [that] everyone [would be] on the same page. We [would not] leave anyone behind. We all ma[de] sure [that] we [would] make the decisions [in which] everyone [would be] comfortable with the decisions. That's one of the ground rules. If someone is not so comfortable, we ma[d]e sure why we [we]re making the decisions.

Their teams discussed their expectations regarding communication and the decision-making process as described. They also focused on understanding "why" certain decisions need to be made rather than just deciding "what" decisions to make. They also ensured everyone was comfortable, meaning they followed collective yet efficient procedures.

A conflict management process not only influenced participants' ways of managing their conflict but also contributed to how participants reflected their conflict during the interviews. When an effective conflict management process was discussed in participants' teams, they did not perceive noteworthy conflict, describing task-related conflict as a "*normal*" team process rather than actual conflict. They also discussed how their team worked well together. On the other hand, participants whose teams did not effectively manage conflict reported "*chaos*," "*communication breakdown*," and poor performance. Team members left the conversation unresolved without understanding where each other was coming from. Thus, this group of participants shared negative conflict narratives with both characteristics of task and relationship conflict (Jehn, 1995; 1997).

Interestingly, Individual differences in leadership and conflict management skills seemed to influence conflict management processes. Participants in teams with effective conflict management processes often discussed the presence of strong leadership and conflict management skills in their teams. On the other hand, participants in other teams shared stories of their leaders lacking such skills. Therefore, this team context appeared to be more influenced by the individual team members comprising the team rather than by the team settings based on virtuality and national diversity.

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To synthesize with the theme of individual differences, the individual differences in personality and previous experience seemed to influence the within-team differences in perceiving and attributing conflict. In case teams had a leader who had good leadership and conflict management skills, they seemed to be able to establish a conflict management process comprising shared expectations, communicating with each other based on their interests, and having an effective and efficient decision-making process. Participants in teams with a clear conflict management process were likely to be able to follow this clear process and constructively manage their conflict, which resulted in them reflecting on their conflict positively during the interview. In other words, participants' experience in conflict was carefully shaped through the interplay between individual and contextual factors.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore how individuals perceive and manage conflict within teams characterized by varying levels of virtuality and nationality, employing the model of individualized conceptualization of conflict. Considering the nature of the research question, this study employed a mixed-methods design to examine both individual and contextual factors and provide a deeper understanding of team dynamics and conflict.

The quantitative results reveal that virtuality negatively influences team performance, whereas national diversity alone does not show a significant effect. It found that individuals who participated in FV-HD teams reported a statistically significant higher presence of conflict than those who participated in other levels of virtuality and national diversity, such as FV-H, FV-MD, HV-H, and IP-HD ($p < 0.05$), indicating the interaction between the two contextual factors. These findings highlight the important roles that virtuality and national diversity play in team dynamics and conflict and provide support for previous scholars' approaches in examining the role of contextual factors (Caputo et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2017; Foster et al., 2015).

This study clarifies the reasons for statistical results and further answers the research question by analyzing semi-structured interview data for between-team and within-team differences. At the between-team level, participants in teams employing virtuality reported more self-censorship behaviors, which limit open communication and contribute to conflict. This dynamic helps explain why virtuality has a statistically negative impact on team performance. Conflict management processes also varied between teams in the same setting: while some established effective conflict management processes, others did not. These differences were often attributed to individual differences in leadership and conflict management skills, which demonstrates the interplay between individual and contextual influences. Furthermore, at the within-team level, differences in personality, knowledge, past experiences, and leadership and conflict management skills contribute to how conflict is perceived and managed. For example, although participants generally agreed on the topic of disagreement, they varied in whether it actually constituted a conflict and in their interpretations of its underlying causes. Also, participants' cultural awareness and their comfort in acknowledging and reporting such differences influenced how participants perceived the impact of national diversity on team dynamics and conflict. This may explain the insignificant effect of national diversity observed in this study and shed light on the inconsistent findings of diversity's impact in previous research (Caputo et al., 2023). After examining both between- and within-team differences, this study concludes that although virtuality shows a clear negative impact and national diversity appears less straightforward in quantitative measures, their ultimate effects rely on the individuals comprising

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each team and the interplay of personal and contextual factors. Such findings align with and extend the model of individual conceptualization of conflict by highlighting the importance of considering contextual and individual factors in studying conflict.

The findings of this study contribute to the current understanding of conflict in nationally diverse virtual team settings in three ways. First, they suggest that inconsistencies in previous literature may stem from a sole focus on external factors, neglecting the internal factors that influence conflict. Although it is meaningful to find that increased levels of virtuality and team diversity negatively impact individual perceptions of conflict presence, the findings did not reveal a consistent pattern across different team settings. These varied relationships can be attributed to individual differences and their interactions with contextual factors. Differences in how individuals perceive, attribute, respond to, and reflect on conflict could have influenced their team dynamics and participants' responses to survey questions. Indeed, the reported effect of national diversity seemed to be influenced by these individual differences. Also, team-specific contexts, such as a conflict management process, seemed to shape participants' conflict behaviors in ways that statistical models could not fully capture. These findings suggest that it is important to recognize that conflict is a multi-faceted phenomenon shaped by external and internal factors. This provides support for using a contingent and contextual approach to study conflict in multinational virtual teams (Caputo et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2010).

Second, the findings also highlight the significant role that moderate virtuality plays in team dynamics, potentially explaining the inconsistent findings in previous literature. The quantitative findings show no significant differences in team performance and conflict between hybrid virtual teams and fully virtual teams, suggesting that both types of teams may face a similar level of challenges. However, qualitative insights reveal that participants in hybrid teams encounter challenges that are sometimes similar to those in fully virtual teams and sometimes similar to those in in-person teams, along with unique issues arising from persistent communication behaviors established during their initial fully virtual interactions. These unique dynamics of hybrid virtual teams underscore the importance of including moderate virtuality as a distinct factor in studying team conflict. The characteristics of hybrid virtual teams may have a statistically significant influence on other variables that were not focused on in this study. This is particularly relevant since previous studies have used broader definitions of virtual teams, including teams with a moderate level of virtuality (Foster et al., 2015). This may be another reason that earlier studies, which often consolidated the differences between hybrid and fully virtual teams, found inconsistent effects of virtuality. Therefore, this study suggests further research to explore moderate virtuality's role in conflict-related challenges and management.

Third, this study finds that the essence of conflict resolution skills and strategies may remain the same regardless of team settings and compositions. Although different levels of virtuality and national diversity were present, the effective conflict management skills shared by participants were those commonly found in the field of conflict resolution (Fisher et al., 2011; Moore, 2014). For instance, it is critical to set clear expectations in preventing conflict since conflict comes from unmet expectations (Lait & Wallace, 2002; Raines, 2023). Interest-based communication is an essential part of the integrative negotiation framework, often used by negotiators (Fisher et al., 2011). The listening and questioning skills that some participants shared are the fundamental communication skills for conflict resolution professionals (Barsky, 2016). This suggests that, despite the different mediums and cultures, the essence of human interactions— setting expectations and respect—remains the same. It also implies that there may be consistent behaviors that prevent destructive conflict and contribute to constructive management of conflict

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that can be applied regardless of such situational differences. Therefore, it will be interesting for future scholars to explore the effective conflict management process across different team settings and what contributes to establishing such a process in contemporary organizational settings.

Finally, this study also makes a unique methodological contribution to the current literature by employing a mixed-methods design. The current literature examining conflict in multinational virtual teams often involves a theoretical framework that requires quantitative data and examines the role of contextual factors. However, this study used a theoretical framework requiring both quantitative and qualitative data. Through the meta-inferences of both data, this study was able to provide the full picture of team conflict from both individual and contextual angles. Through such an approach, this study found that sole quantitative results may be limited in examining team conflict due to the complex nature of contextual factors interplaying with individual factors in team dynamics and conflict. It also highlighted how individuals perceive and manage conflict similarly and differently within team settings characterized by various levels of virtuality and national diversity. Therefore, this study not only extends the theoretical boundaries of the model but also advocates future researchers to employ the mixed-methods design to provide readers with such "multiple ways of seeing" and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Conclusion

With the ongoing changes in organizational settings, there is a growing need to understand how to prevent destructive conflict and manage it constructively across various team environments. This study aimed to address these needs. However, as with many other research studies, it also has its limitations, which present opportunities for future investigation. First, due to its experimental nature, the findings of this study are context specific. While the controlled environment allowed for a focused comparison of the effects of virtuality and diversity, future research should validate these findings in real-world settings to enhance their applicability. Second, the sample size for each team configuration was limited. This study relied on convenient sampling—interviewing survey volunteers—which limited the diversity of interview participants across all nine team settings. Although Boddy (2016) finds that even one sample size can still provide meaningful and informative results that are worthy of publication, larger sample sizes would provide a more comprehensive and generalizable understanding of team dynamics. Third, this study examined contextual factors through an online survey and individual differences via semi-structured interviews but did not integrate individual factors into the statistical models. Future studies should consider including both contextual and individual dimensions in their survey instruments while also exploring these dynamics qualitatively. This approach will offer a deeper insight into the complex interplay of the individual and contextual factors influencing team conflict. Further investigations in these areas will significantly contribute to navigating the uncertainties and challenges associated with conflict in diverse and dynamic environments and increasing our confidence and abilities to manage one of the most fundamental aspects of human interaction, conflict, in organizational settings.

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Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Question

1.   In general, how was your experience with your team members?
2.   To what extent do you feel that you developed a rapport with your team members in general and at each round?
3.   What could have been done to improve rapport among group members?
4.   To what extent do you trust your team members? Why?
5.   To what extent do you think your group was getting along? Why?
6.   Did your team reach an agreement about ground rules or otherwise build shared expectations?
If so, what were they? How were they established? Can you give an example of one norm?
If not, why do you think that your team did not have ground rules and shared expectations?
7.   What was your team's decision-making process like?
8.   How efficient was your team at making decisions at each round (e.g., using your time effectively)?
9.   How effective were the team decisions at each round?
10.   Could you describe your leader's behavior?

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If you were a leader, could you describe your behavior as a leader?

11.   What kind of challenges have you experienced in sharing knowledge and information with your team members, if any?

12.   To what extent did you feel that everyone was aware of what's going on with the operations of the team?

If so, what did it take to ensure that everyone was aware of what's going on?

If not, what would have improved this?

13.   Have you experienced any delay in sending/receiving feedback to/from your team members?

If yes, what caused this delay? How did this time affect your performance? How did this time affect your team's performance?

If not, why not?

14.   Have you ever noticed any cultural differences while interacting with your team members?

If so, what kind of differences did you have? Did the differences create any challenges working with them?

If so, what kind of challenges did you have?

If not, why not?

15.   Did you feel work was fairly distributed across the team?

If yes, how did you ensure this?

If not, why do you think this has happened? What would have resolved this issue?

16.   What kinds of conflict did you have in your team, if any?

If yes, what caused these conflicts? How did you deal with them? What could have prevented this conflict?

17.   (If participant was assigned to a 0% virtual team) To what extent were you able to focus on completing your exercise in the classroom, not distracted by anything?

18.   (If the participant answers that there was a certain degree of distraction) What distracted you?

19.   (If the participant was assigned to a hybrid team) In which space did you feel that you were more productive, in the classroom or at home? Why?

20.   (If the participant was assigned to a fully virtual team) Have you ever felt distracted while doing this exercise at home?

If yes, what distracted you?

If not, why not?

21.   (If the participant was assigned to a hybrid or fully virtual team) Have you experienced any difficulty in scheduling a meeting with the team?

22.   Would you have done anything differently if you participated in an online group?

23.   Are there any questions or comments to add?

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How are metaphors used in negotiation? A communication context analysis

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Abstract

This study explores how metaphors can be used in negotiation to convey meaning and understanding about abstract concepts. The authors identify and synthesize the experiences of practicing negotiators and provide practical recommendations regarding the use of metaphors before, during, and after a negotiation. Data was collected from 20 practicing negotiators by way of semi-structured interviews, transcribed and analyzed by way of a thematic analysis. Adair *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) model of contextual dimensions of communication acted as a coding framework. A thematic analysis of interview data complements the existing literature on metaphors and negotiation. The findings confirm that negotiators use metaphors before, during, and after negotiations. The predominant use of metaphors occurs in a contextual relationship or spatial dimension of communication as opposed to a message, or time context. Further, there are various positive effects of using metaphors in negotiations: facilitating communication, positively influencing the emotional environment, and acting as helpful mental models in the preparation and follow-up of negotiation meetings. The principal practical take-aways for negotiators from our study are: 1) When negotiating, it is generally beneficial for the process and outcome of the negotiation to use metaphors; 2) To improve the strategic use of metaphors in negotiation, it is useful to critically reflect on the types, origins, and uses of one's own metaphors; 3) Metaphors are useful for summarizing and integrating information in the context of negotiation; 4) Metaphoric language can be used to improve the atmosphere in a negotiation meeting or to get across a difficult point.

Introduction

Journalists often use metaphors to describe real-life negotiations to make them more easily understandable and relatable. For example, the negotiations about the United Kingdom's (UK's) exit from the European Union (EU) were frequently characterized as a divorce emphasizing the complexity of disentangling the UK from EU regulations, agreements, and institutions. Trade negotiations, such as those within the World Trade Organization, have been compared to a tug of war between competing interests, stressing the competing demands of different nations and industries with each side trying to pull the outcome in their favor. When companies engage in merger and acquisition negotiations, the process is often compared to a courtship or dating. This metaphor highlights the stages of building a relationship from initial interest to final commitment. Negotiation trainers, coaches, and negotiators themselves regularly use metaphorical language to characterize their actions, tactics, and strategies. For example, in an article published in Harvard Business Review, Leary *et al.* (2013) stated that while some people "boil over" in negotiations, others "freeze up", that if you inadvertently "get under a counterpart's skin", talks can go "off the rails", and that negotiation is simply a matter of "cool calculation". These examples show how metaphors can be used to convey meaning and understanding about abstract concepts, which are ubiquitous in negotiation.

The value of studying metaphors lies in their ability to integrate, shape, and structure information (Hartel & Savolainen, 2016; Ziemkiewicz & Kosara, 2008) as well as in the influence they can have on people's cognition, emotions, and perceptions, in particular perceptions of relationships (Deetz & Mumby, 1985). In a negotiation context, metaphors, such as the metaphor of a battle or the metaphor of a dance, can strongly influence how negotiators think and feel about the negotiation, how they approach the negotiation, how they perceive their counterparts, or how they behave during the negotiation (Cohen, 2003; Docherty, 2004; Gelfand & McCusker, 2017; Smith, 2005). While previous studies have investigated the use of metaphors in negotiation, the evidence remains inconclusive as to what role metaphors play for negotiators and what effect they have on negotiators' choice of strategy.

Our explorative interview study aims to continue this line of research by investigating how practicing negotiators with international work experience use metaphors to make sense of negotiation situations. In particular, we provide new insights by presenting novel empirical evidence and, thus, enhance the understanding of the role of metaphors in negotiation beyond existing findings. To evaluate the collected interview data¸ we draw on Adair *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) model of contextual dimensions of communication which posits that people have different predispositions towards the message, relationship, temporal, or spatial context of a communication. We argue that these predispositions are reflected by the metaphors our interviewees use to characterize negotiation.

Considering the views of practicing international negotiators, our study offers three extensions to the research agenda. Firstly, the study brings to the surface the experiences of practicing negotiators in relation to the use of metaphors in negotiation situations. Thus, it serves as a pilot for future experimental research and inspires the selection of specific metaphors or experimental variables for further investigations, for instance, on the impact of metaphors on the quality of communication or the emotional environment in the context of negotiation. Secondly, the study provides managerial recommendations that are informed by the experiences of professional negotiators regarding the use and potential reshaping of metaphors with a view to

improving both the process and outcome of negotiations. A third contribution of our study lies in its international dimension. Since communication, consensus building, and cooperation are more complex in intercultural than in intracultural contexts (e.g., Adair & Brett, 2005; Liu, Chua, & Stahl, 2010), it is particularly valuable to study the experiences of negotiators who have been exposed to different cultures – an experience that is becoming increasingly common nowadays. The international dimension of our study allows us to explore diverse negotiation situations and metaphors used to characterize them which are not tied to a single national culture. More specifically, our study explores the following two research questions:

RQ1. Which types of metaphors do professional international negotiators use to characterize a negotiation process?

RQ2. How do these metaphors influence the experience of professional negotiators?

In addressing these research questions and for the purpose of this study, we take a static view of metaphors in that we consider them stable during the process of a negotiation and assume that metaphors influence the whole experience of negotiation. Further, we are not claiming to make any statements about a cause-effect relationship between metaphors and negotiators' experiences. Rather, our aim is to better understand, in an exploratory sense, what types of metaphors are used by international negotiators and how those metaphors influence the experiences of those negotiators.

Literature Review

In the following, we first review the management literature on studies on the occurrence, role, and use of metaphors in the context of business. In particular, we present Lakoff's (1993) theory of metaphor as a theoretical background for our study. Second, we review the negotiation literature with a focus on identifying empirical studies on metaphors in relation to negotiation. Third, we introduce Adair *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) theory of contextual dimensions of communication. Adair *et al.*'s work provides the analytical framework for coding our interview data and for interpreting and evaluating the patterns emerging from the data.

Metaphors in management research

In classical theories of language, metaphor is defined as "a novel or poetic linguistic expression where one or more words for a concept are used outside of its normal conventional meaning to express a similar concept" (Lakoff, 1993, p. 1). However, as Lakoff points out, a metaphor is not only a figure of speech, but also a mode of thought which helps humans to make sense of abstract concepts (Lakoff, 1993). Abstract concepts are compared with concrete concepts to facilitate understanding. For example, as Lakoff illustrates, a love relationship (abstract) may be metaphorically referred to as a journey (concrete), as in "our relationship has hit a dead-end street" or "we may have to go our separate ways". Business research has mainly looked at metaphors as a basis for understanding (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). According to Moran (1989), "the use of metaphor implies a way of thinking and a way of seeing". Following this characterization of metaphors as ways of thinking, in their review paper on metaphors in organizational research, Cornelissen *et al.* (2008) distinguish between a contextual and de-contextual approach to the use of metaphors. The contextual approach interprets metaphors as figures of speech in a narrow context. The de-contextual, cognitive approach envisions metaphors

as a tool to organize thought and experience, in line with Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

For this study, we follow Lakoff (1993) by differentiating between the linguistic and conceptual dimension of a metaphor. Further, we adopt Cornelissen *et al.*'s (2008) de-contextual approach in that we do not focus on specific metaphors used in negotiation transcripts but, instead, investigate how metaphors are used by negotiators to reflect and organize their thoughts and experiences.

Management scholars have also conducted empirical studies on the use of metaphors in business. Morris *et al.* (2007) looked at two types of metaphors in stock market commentary. Agent metaphors characterize price change as a volitional action (i.e., "the Dow fought its way upward") whereas object metaphors portray them as movements of inanimate objects ("the Dow fell through a resistance level"). They found that agent metaphors appeared more frequently when the trend was steady and had a positive direction. Cornelissen *et al.* (2011) investigated the role of metaphor and analogy in the framing and legitimization of strategic change. They found that metaphors are more effective in the context of substitutive change, as opposed to additive change, and that the effectiveness of metaphors in the framing of change depends on the degree of their cultural familiarity to stakeholders as well as their relationship with prior motivation of stakeholders. Tourish and Hargie's (2012) in-depth interview study explored the role of root metaphors used by banking CEOs to explain the 2008 banking crisis. The metaphors used showed the bankers' desire to diminish their responsibility and inefficiency regarding the framing of public debate. Landau *et al.* (2015) investigated the divergent effects of pictorial metaphors in company logos on observers. Liu *et al.*'s (2015) study demonstrates how metaphoric language reflects the way newly formed international joined ventures (IJVs) are managed, and how variations in performance related to IJV control complexity. Two types of relational metaphors, patriarchal family and modern marriage, were found to be used to characterize IJVs. Semantic fit or misfit moderated by asymmetrical or symmetrical equity structure affected the achievement of strategic goals and the quality of relationship in IJVs. Kuckertz (2019) investigated the role of the biological metaphor of entrepreneurial ecosystems in the academic discourse on entrepreneurial research and practice. Most recently, Chin *et al.* (2021) explored a sea-like heuristic metaphor to uncover a complex knowledge-creating mechanism in the modern digital context of cross-cultural business models and suggested that metaphor can be used as a lens to analyze such complex phenomena.

Metaphors in negotiation research

Research on metaphors in negotiation has primarily focused on cultural differences in the use of metaphoric language in negotiations (e.g., Chmielecki, 2013; Schlie & Young, 2008; Smith, 2005, 2009), linguistic differences in the use of metaphors (e.g., Cohen, 2000, 2001a, 2001b), the impact of metaphoric language on the quality of communication in negotiation (Liu *et al.*, 2010), the role of metaphors for the conduct of negotiation processes (e.g., Smith, 2005, 2009), and the role of specific metaphors, such as dance, war, game, etc. in the context of international negotiations (e.g., Hall & Hall, 1976; Spector, 1996).

Hall and Hall (1976) use the metaphor of dance to illustrate the universality of negotiation as a phenomenon, yet the rhythms and movements are specific to the culture of the negotiators. Faure (1998) found that Chinese subjects prefer different metaphors when negotiating with domestic and foreign negotiators, and the choice of metaphor affects their strategy. A metaphor "mobile welfare" is used to describe a negotiation with foreigners reflecting a competitive attitude and resulting in

tactics such as making false concessions, frightening the opponent, making the opponent feel guilty, or wearing down the opponent psychologically and physically. A different metaphor, "joint quest," is applied when a partner is from China or a foreigner familiar with Chinese culture. This metaphor implies cooperative tactics, including politeness, indirect communication, and rituals. Chmielecki (2013) compared the types of metaphors used by Polish, British, American, and Chinese negotiators. He found support for the hypothesis that Polish negotiators define and understand negotiations more similar to British and American negotiators than to Chinese negotiators. Cohen (2000, 2001a, 2001b) looked at metaphors typical of specific cultures to characterize negotiations. The analysis of negotiations in English-speaking cultures showed that negotiation is envisioned as an activity. Negotiations in the US and the UK are characterized by non-violent tactics and effective and fair conflict resolution. Key metaphors of conflict in Costa-Rican Spanish were, instead, related to heat, feeling lost or trapped, and being ingrained in a network of people. The word "enredo", one of the names of conflict, stems from a "fishermen's net" and reflects how conflicts are spread in close communities based on extended family relationships. According to Cohen (2001a), the four dominant themes of metaphors in the English language are industrial relations, engineering, Christian theology, and sports and games. Many industrial metaphors are related to labor-management disputes, which presuppose that negotiations follow set rules and, as a result, are non-violent, fair and represent the opinion of low-power participants. Engineering metaphors depict negotiations as processes in which every problem can be solved through a rational analysis. The "good faith" metaphor and its sub-themes stem from Christian theology and emphasize such values as honesty and commitment to a resolution of a conflict. Sports metaphors emphasize the idea of fairness. In their review, Imai and Gelfand (2009) showed how negotiation metaphors in Arabic and Hebrew are different from those in British and American English. In the Arabic culture, negotiations are closely linked to the concepts of honor, dignity, reputation, and face. Clan rivalry is common and even minor disputes can evolve into matters of honor. In Hebrew, the source of metaphors in negotiation are the Torah, Judaism, and Jewish law. Negotiation is envisioned as an ongoing intellectual duel which can never be totally resolved (Cohen, 2000).

More recently, Gelfand and McCusker (2017) looked at the relationship between negotiation and culture through the lens of metaphor and characterized metaphor as both a theoretical perspective that can connect research on culture and negotiation and a practical approach to manage negotiation. Meunier and Morin (2016) found that most metaphors in bilateral trade and investment negotiations are mechanical metaphors (e.g., "building blocks", "stumbling stones") and are not just figures of speech, but also patterns of thinking. Ippolito and Adler (2018) explored if and how the musical ensemble metaphor can make a mindset more settlement-oriented and affect conflict outcomes. Marmol Queralto (2021) analyzed metaphors surrounding the Brexit negotiations in general, and the status of Gibraltar in particular.

Since metaphors are abstract concepts that help individuals make sense of information, the findings of studies which apply construal level theory in negotiation research can also shed light on potential effects of metaphors on negotiation processes and outcomes. Construal level theory (CLT) proposes that for various reasons people form abstract mental representations of psychologically distant objects (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Thus, CLT assumes varying levels of mental representations: high-level construals, which are abstract and conserve the essential, invariant properties of the referent object, and lower-level representations, which are more concrete and detailed. Research on the role of construal levels in negotiation has consistently shown that negotiators who construed issues abstractly rather than concretely reached better agreements and gained higher profits (Giacomantonio, De Dreu, & Mannetti, 2010; Henderson,

Trope, & Carnevale, 2006; Henderson & Trope, 2009; Wening, Keith, & Abele, 2016). To be more specific, having negotiators think abstractly rather than concretely about issues increased negotiators' logrolling (Henderson, Trope, & Carnevale, 2006), propensity to discover integrative agreements (Henderson & Trope, 2009), ability to revise their faulty fixed-pie perceptions, accept offers based on the underlying interests representations, reporting of higher cooperative problem-solving (Giacomantonio, De Dreu, & Mannetti, 2010), and focus more on interests and the exchange of information (Wening, Keith & Abele, 2016). Abstract versus concrete thinking can also promote the prospects of peace in contexts of intergroup conflict resolution (Halevy & Berson, 2022). Therefore, CLT would suggest that if metaphors are of high-level construal, they should facilitate information processing and increase the likelihood of integrative agreements.

To conclude, our literature review has shown that the most common research topic is the use of metaphors by negotiators in specific cultures. To our knowledge, there is no published interview study that seeks to directly investigate the views of practicing international negotiators on the types, origins, uses, perceptions, and effects of metaphors in negotiation. Our study aims at filling this gap. In doing so we follow a constructivist approach to culture, according to which culture influences individual cognition and behavior by activating knowledge structures via cultural, motivational, and contextual cues (e.g., Hong *et al.*, 2000; Morris and Fu, 2001). We explore the experiences of negotiators who have been exposed to different cultures throughout their careers. To analyze our data and make sense of these diverse international experiences we chose the theory of communication contexts (Adair *et al.*, 2016, 2024). Since communication is essential in negotiation, this framework is most suitable to analyze negotiators' perceptions and experiences.

Contextual dimensions of communication

The theory of communication contexts goes back to Hall's (1973) distinction between high and low context communication cultures. Representatives of high context cultures rely less on explicit verbal messages and pay more attention to implicit communication, whereas individuals from low context cultures disregard contextual cues in communication and social interaction (Adair *et al.*, 2016, 2024). The theory of communication contexts was further developed and adapted to an individual level by Adair *et al.* (2016, 2024) who proposed four contextual dimensions of communication: the message, relational, temporal, and spatial context. These four dimensions were chosen to fully understand communication contexts and reflect both the content and form of the message conveyed (Adair, 2016), since, according to Hall (1966, 1973, 1989; Hall & Hall, 1990) attitudes to interpersonal relationships, space, and time can capture the influence of culture on communication. Since communication is essential in negotiation, this framework is most suitable for our analysis. The message context is defined as "the cues that convey implied and inferred meaning accompanying a verbal message in communication" (Adair *et al.*, 2016, p. 200). Direct or explicit communicators use predominantly verbal messages, while indirect or implicit communicators rely on nonverbal cues which contain crucial information (Adair *et al.*, 2016; Triandis *et al.*, 1968). The relationship context is defined as "the cues relating to the meaning associated with the nature of a relationship between two interlocutors" (Adair *et al.*, 2016, p. 201) and shows the importance of personal relationships for communicators (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2011). This context also captures the role of face-saving and relationship-maintaining for the communicators (Adair *et al.*, 2016). The temporal context, or communicators' attitude to time, captures variations in temporal focus, pace of life, and time horizons (Adair *et al.*, 2016). A polychronic view of time prioritizes harmony in interpersonal relationships over deadlines,

whereas monochronic cultures put more emphasis on goal completion than relationship maintenance (Triandis, 1994). The spatial context is defined as "cues within interlocutors' physical environment that carry meaning associated with communication engagement and attention" (Adair *et al.*, 2016, p. 201). This context is not confined to the distance between the interlocutors, but also includes gestures or face expression (Adair *et al.*, 2016). Hall emphasizes that space is not limited to physical space perceived by vision, but also by other senses: "auditory space is perceived by the ears, thermal space by the skin, kinesthetic space by the muscles, and olfactory space by the nose" (Hall & Hall, 1990: 11).

In the analysis of our interview data, we use Adair *et al.*'s four contextual dimensions of communication as a guiding framework to make sense of how our interviewees' individual experiences and exposures to different cultures have shaped their way of thinking and their attitude to negotiation as reflected by the metaphors they use. In choosing this framework we followed an abductive approach in that the choice was not only theoretical, but also data driven. After collecting, and initially analyzing the interview data, we identified Adair *et al.*'s model as the most suitable theoretical framework to structure the presentation of our data. Given many interviewees referred to metaphors related to message, space, time, and relationships, Adair *et al.*'s model proved a natural fit for making sense of our data. It is important to note that when using the model and in line with the original definitions of the four contextual dimensions, the context of a metaphor is not limited to the context in which the metaphor is used. Rather, it includes the context of the image expressed by the metaphor. In that sense, the spatial context of a metaphor is, for instance, not limited to the physical environment of the negotiation, as explained above.

Methods

For this study, we collected data from professional negotiators using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques (Bell *et al.*, 2022). For the convenience sampling, we reached out to the researchers' contacts via email and LinkedIn. All targeted individuals were professionals engaged in negotiations within the areas of commerce, diplomacy, or education. For the snowball sampling, we leveraged responses from the initial message round to solicit contact information from negotiators willing to join the study. These newly identified individuals were then directly contacted by email. The reason for employing the snowball method was to expand the participant pool. As a result of these combined efforts, we conducted interviews with a total of 20 participants.

As shown in Table 1, the range of participants' negotiation experience spanned from four to 35 years. The average years of experience within the sample were 18.1 years. We calculated the sample mean omitting participants P02 and P07 who didn't disclose the length of their experience. Among the 20 negotiators constituting the sample, seven were engaged in sales roles, six held positions in general management, three were involved in project management, two worked as diplomats, one assumed a consultant role, and another operated in human resources. This sample encompassed negotiators from five distinct occupational sectors: communication, construction, diplomacy, chemical, and education. Three of the interviewed negotiators (15 percent) self-identified as female, while the remaining 17 (85 percent) identified as male.

Table 1: Overview of sample

Participant	Gender	Role	Industry	Years of experience	Nationality
P01	M	Product manager	Communication	25	Italian
P02	M	Managing director	Construction	-	French/Algerian
P03	M	Commercial director	Construction	26	French
P04	F	Human resources director	Communication	24	Bolivian/French
P05	M	Sales manager	Construction	25	Mexican/French
P06	M	Managing director	Construction	22	French
P07	M	Retired	Diplomacy	-	French/Madagascan
P08	M	Project director	Construction	10	Egyptian
P09	M	General consul	Diplomacy	21	French/Algerian
P10	M	Track and rail manager	Construction	16	Canadian/Indian
P11	M	Retired	Chemical	25	French
P12	M	Purchasing director	Communication	9	French/Dutch
P13	M	Sales director	Communication	4	Brazilian/Italian
P14	F	Sales manager	Communication	8	Colombian
P15	M	Program director	Education	35	Colombian/Italian
P16	M	Sales manager	Communication	20+	Moroccan/French
P17	M	Business developer	Communication	4	Indian
P18	M	Program director	Education	15	Indian
P19	F	Advisor	Construction	25	Vietnamese/French
P20	M	Agency director	Construction	12	French

Interviews were conducted in three languages, French, English, and Spanish using video-conferencing tools. Each interview lasted between 40 to 50 minutes. The sessions were recorded through audio devices, transcribed verbatim, and, subsequently translated into English if the interview was conducted in French of Spanish. Translation was carried out by research assistants fluent in English, French, and Spanish, following the guidelines outlined by Regmi *et al*. (2010) for qualitative research translation.

We checked our data regarding any methods-induced variations (for example, whether the fact that someone was interviewed in Spanish, as opposed to English, or the fact that one interview lasted longer than another interview, had an impact on what the interviewees said). While it was our goal to collect diverse views until the data are saturated, the diversity of views should be driven by the interviewees' experiences and reflections rather than the method used to collect the data.

Employing a semi-structured approach, the interviews featured a predetermined set of questions, with room for interviewers to introduce additional follow-up inquiries based on the course of each discussion. An English version of the interview schedule, including all questions, is attached as Appendix 1. For access to the primary data, interested readers may contact the corresponding author. This data is not publicly accessible to maintain the confidentiality of participants.

We conducted a thematic analysis of the transcribed data following the steps recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) and implemented through the NVivo software. This analysis included seven steps. Initially, we immersed ourselves in the data, repeatedly reading the translated interview transcripts. Coding followed in step two, involving the identification, and labeling of text segments relevant to the research inquiry. Codes agreed upon by all authors were cataloged in a shared NVivo database. Subsequent steps encompassed the identification of themes and sub-themes in alignment with broader patterns of meaning, informed by concepts from the literature

review, in particular Adair *et al.*' (2016, 2024) model of contextual dimensions of communication. The identified themes and sub-themes were further revised until a consensus was reached among the authors on their alignment with the research question. The agreed-upon themes and sub-themes were collectively revisited for data alignment, leading to a reduction in the number of themes from 11 to 5. The naming of themes and selection of illustrative quotes were decided. Lastly, commonalities and differences in views expressed by interviewed negotiators within each theme were identified.

In alignment with recent works by Brown and Clarke (2019, 2021a, 2021b) on reflexivity in qualitative research, our approach aimed for transparency throughout data collection and analysis, acknowledging the potential influence of our individual backgrounds, positions, understandings, and experiences as researchers. Reflecting on our roles, we identified patterns of interpretation linked to our identities and negotiation experiences. We acknowledge that differing age, gender, and cultural backgrounds at times elicited divergent responses to the interview transcripts. While striving for consensus in data interpretation and presentation, we acknowledge the inherently subjective and interpretative nature of our data analysis.

Findings

To structure our interview data, we used Adair *et al.*'s (2016) model of contextual dimensions of communication as a theoretical framework. In a first step, we identified metaphors in the interview data and grouped them into five themes emerging from the data. Second, we mapped the themes to the four contextual dimensions: message, relationship, temporal, and spatial context (see Table 2). Some metaphors could not be attributed to any of the four contextual dimensions and were, thus, grouped under the umbrella category "other". Apart from identifying individual metaphors, we also asked interviewees about their experiences of using the metaphors they described before, during, or after a negotiation.

As to the relationship between the five themes we identified and the four communication contexts, the key difference between them is that the themes emerged from the data, whereas the communication contexts represent a theoretical construct. When we tried to make sense of the five themes we identified, we noticed their similarity with Adair *et al.*'s four dimensions of communication contexts. For some themes, such as the theme "relationship", the link to a communication context was very direct. For others, such as the themes "process", or "global", this link was less direct.

Table 2: Themes and contexts

| Theme | Context | | | | |
	Message	Relationship	Time	Space	Other
Process	-	-	4	2	-
Outcome	3	-	-	1	-
Global	1	-	-	8	2
Party	-	4	-	-	-
Relationship	-	5	-	1	-

Message context

We found four instances of metaphors that could be associated with the message context of Adair *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) model (see Table 3). Three of them related to the outcome of a negotiation. One metaphor related to negotiation in general.

Table 3: Message context metaphors

Theme	Metaphor	Quotation	Participant
Outcome	Win-win	*"So, I always say that negotiation is a win-win, so it's a metaphor."*	P12
	Show me the money	*"Oh, it's very hard but it's more like it's an image like "show me the money". There's a very famous thing from a movie called Jerry McGuire where there is this scene of "show me the money" and I don't know why but your question made me think of that."*	P18
	Win-lose	*"In certain negotiations there can be winners and losers."*	P07
Global	Recipe	*"I would say that it reminds me of a recipe because there are ingredients to be respected and weighed up. Indeed, in a recipe you have to be careful about the dosage as well as the taste of the others. Some people will like spicy food, others less so or not at all, so we think that we will change the way we prepare the recipe."*	P19

Relationship context

We found nine metaphors that could be associated with the relationship context of Adair *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) model (see Table 4). Five of those metaphors directly referred to the relationship between the negotiators. The other four metaphors referred to the relationship indirectly in that their focus was on the negotiating parties.

Table 4: Relationship context metaphors

Theme	Metaphor	Quotation	Participant
Relationship	Marriage	"*It would rather be seen a bit as a kind of marriage and symbiosis. [...] Suddenly, it [a negotiation] can create long-term partnerships. So, a marriage or a couple could be an option. But in the life of a partnership, there are always hiccups and always a moment when it goes well or when we understand each other better. [...] So, I don't see it [a negotiation] as something linear, I see it as something that is constantly built like the life of a couple.*"	P12
	Happy marriage	"*I would talk about a happy marriage, that is to say that everyone finds his account at the end, and so here is the happy marriage. We are in sync, and we are celebrating.*"	P09
	Seduction	"*Seduction is interesting at the beginning, when we get to know the person, but once the person is seduced and it is reciprocal on both sides, we are no longer in seduction. [...] Basically, exchange a service or good so it could be, for example, a good that you're buying and hence you must negotiate for it and you're paying that with money. So, for me it's an interchange of services or goods.*"	P16
	Shaking hands	"*The first picture that comes to my mind is two people shaking hands, which is that you have agreed on something. And you basically make it work what you have achieved together.*"	P10
	Outstretched hands	"*Well, I don't know, I mean the customer reaching out to you, looking for a solution. And so, through this outstretched hand, he would reach a satisfactory solution in relation to what he is asking.*"	P16
Party	Carpet dealer	"*It's the metaphor of a carpet dealer. It's easy, it's just people haggling to lower the price, without having any other arguments to justify it.*"	P01
	Person leaving	"*So, then it can be the negotiation that goes wrong? Uh... it can be the one who closes his PC [personal computer] who leaves the meeting room.*"	P20
	Hammer and anvil	"*In terms of image, I would like to give one where we are more in a situation with the hammer and the anvil, i.e., a client who imposes a technology on us and we will have to adapt with the supplier and so we will try to find levers for negotiating the purchase.*"	P12
	Hare and tortoise	"*So, I use the example of, let's say, the hare and the tortoise.*"	P15

Spatial context

We found 12 metaphors that could be assigned to the spatial context of Adair *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) model (see Table 5). One of them referred to the outcome of a negotiation, two to the process of negotiation, one to the relationship between negotiators, and six to negotiations in general.

Table 5: Spatial context metaphors

Theme	Metaphor	Quotation	Participant
Outcome	Foundation of a building	"*The foundation of a building so that the building can withstand earthquakes. This construction must be solid. In relation to the negotiation, it is the same, I think that both parties must be solid and satisfied, which could then perhaps lead to a future partnership.*"	P19
Process	To reach top of a mountain	"*The picture could be a guy trying to reach the top of a mountain because it demands a lot of effort to reach. OK, that would be my picture for that.*"	P14
	Two-way street	"*I can tell you a metaphor. Yes, one metaphor that I can share with you [...] is a two-way street. If you give fairness, you receive fairness and vice versa. It's not a one-way street. You cannot just receive.*"	P10
Relationship	Two people connected by a very fine thread	"*This image would look like two people connected by a very fine thread, very fragile. Each holds the thread by one end. And at times one of the two people may pull, and at that moment when one pulls, it is absolutely necessary that the other lets go the thread a little bit to ensure that the thread remains intact and doesn't break.*"	P04
Global	Landscape	"*When I talk about a negotiation, for me a negotiation has become the perfect landscape, like the beach, because nowadays I enjoy it.*"	P14
	Mountain	"*It [a negotiation] would really be either a mountain or a cliff.*"	P06
	Shared space	"*I think that negotiation is the space that you share with other people whom you are trying to convince.*"	P14
	Universe	"*I will represent negotiation as the universe. That is to say, it is something that rotates in perpetuity with a continual effect that is permanent and at the same time different planets of different sizes that are connected to each other, and our role is to be in the middle of all these planets and to adapt.*"	P07
	Two people around a table	"*So here is an image, it would be two people around a table, preferably not too big the table to be able to raise his voice and be able to see each other well. That is the negotiation.*"	P20
	Meeting around a campfire	"*For me it [a negotiation] would have aspects of perhaps a meeting around a campfire.*"	P14
	Green field	"*So, before going to a negotiation, first [...] it's a green field.*"	P09
	Balance	"*We must try to maintain the balance, otherwise we have agreed on something that will be useless in the future or that will create too much tension. [...] the goal for me [when preparing for a negotiation] is to try to understand the forces involved, mine and that of the other party.*"	P11

Temporal context

Four metaphors contained references to processes evolving over time and were, thus, attributed to the temporal context according Adairs *et al.*'s (2016, 2014) model (see Table 6).

Table 6: Temporal context metaphors

Theme	Metaphor	Quotation	Participant
Process	Dance	*"A kind of dance, a kind of tango, for example, because in negotiations there are several phases, an approach phase where you try to get to know your interlocutor and to get to know a little more about him. [...] And then you need a bit of charm too because you have to show some interest in the person."*	P01
	Game	*"It becomes a kind of chess game because everyone can have their own strategy. There can also be traps in the negotiation, so you have to be aware. You have to be very careful and not go too fast, you have to leave time to think while you are talking."*	P01
	Yoga	*"I would also come up with an image of people doing yoga. [...] I believe that in a negotiation you want both sides to be happy. That's why I like the image of yoga."*	P15
	Story	*"Negotiation is first and foremost a story, that is to say that it is an exchange, a negotiation is never an act, a trivial act, and it depends strongly on the stakes of the negotiation."*	P17

Other contexts

Two metaphors could not be attributed to any of the four communication contexts described in Adairs *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) model (see Table 7). Both of those metaphors referred to negotiation in general.

Table 7: Other metaphors

Theme	Metaphor	Quotation	Participant
Global	Good war	*"A battle in which each side has its strengths, and each side would like to win the battle. The goal of this battle is, ultimately, for everyone to be happy. It's a beautiful battle, a good war."*	P05
	Not a war	*"Negotiation is not a war. That's what I want to say. Negotiation means reaching agreements, making concessions on both sides, but it's not a war."*	P19

Experiences of using metaphors

Apart from identifying individual metaphors and mapping them to the four contextual dimensions of Adairs *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) model, we also asked interviewees about their experiences of using the metaphors they described before, during, or after a negotiation. Four participants reported having used metaphors when preparing for a negotiation. They used them to either mentally prepare for an upcoming negotiation or as an image for guiding the setting up of the venue of an upcoming negotiation (see Table 8).

Table 8: Experiences of using metaphors before a negotiation

Use	Quotation	Participant
Mental preparation	"*That is to say that in all the negotiations or discussions that we can have with a supplier on many aspects, anticipation is key. So, if I'm in a negotiation, we'll say arm wrestling, or the clients will really fight to obtain the contract. I'm going to try to anticipate it, I'm going to give myself all the keys so that I get the maximum.*"	P09
	"*So, before going to a negotiation, first […] it's a green field.*"	P09
	"*We must try to maintain the balance, otherwise we have agreed on something that will be useless in the future or that will create too much tension. […] the goal for me [when preparing for a negotiation] is to try to understand the forces involved, mine and that of the other party.*"	P11
Setting up venue	"*So, if we make the simile, let's say, with the image I gave you [a meeting around a campfire], the place is important. The climate is also important, it's important that you feel comfortable. That the temperature is pleasant, that you feel good in that space and that it makes the other person feel good.*"	P08

15 participants reported having used metaphors during negotiation meetings for a range of reasons (see Table 9). For instance, one participant described using metaphors as communication tools to efficiently get across a difficult topic. Another participant described using metaphors during a negotiation meeting to improve the emotional atmosphere. A further participant reported using them only very infrequently in order to overcome difficulties during a negotiation. Two participants described experiences where metaphors acted as mental images helping them to approach the dynamics of a negotiation. One participant stated having used metaphors only indirectly by "making them feel" during a negotiation. Another participant described an example of using a metaphor to demonstrate cultural awareness during a negotiation and, again, another participant how using a metaphor during a negotiation can help getting noticed by the other party. One final participant pointed out the risk of misunderstanding when using a metaphor during a negotiation.

Table 9: Experiences of using metaphors during a negotiation

Use	Quotation	Participant
Communication tool	"*Sometimes, when you want, especially when my interlocutors are not technical and as I work in services, they have a technological nature, sometimes I use metaphors so that the clients can understand what I want to convey. And I also feel that it's a good tool because when you speak with metaphors it conveys, it's easier to get your message across, isn't it?*"	P08
Improving the atmosphere	"*In a negotiation scenario, there are also metaphors which mean that we can raise certain topics of discussion to lighten the atmosphere a little.*"	P01
Overcoming difficulties	"*The truth is that I don't use them [metaphors] very often. I use them only when I see that there are difficulties. Let's say that I usually think that a frank and direct conversation is much better.*"	P07
Mental model	"*So, in fact, if we keep the example of the recipe, we can say that we can modify it, add a little salt, and if it's too salty, we'll remove certain ingredients and then add a little sugar, and so on. In the negotiation, we must always leave ourselves some way out. In fact, you have to be capable of modifying your negotiation according to the way in which your interlocutors are going to act. If you come with something that is too well constructed, and you don't have a way out, the negotiation leverage will be complicated.*"	P10
	"*If I keep the image of the scale, it will bring the extremes in the discussion to something that will be a common thread, but closest to a balance. So, it means that maybe at certain times in this negotiation, I will concede [...]. If I didn't concede, uh, there may be too much way, either on my side or on the other side. So, my nature is rather to try to guide the other to the point of balance.*"	P11
Indirect use	"*No, I didn't use it, but I think I made it feel. I made the fact felt that I am watching over the quality of the relationship, and I absolutely want to understand the counterpart.*"	P18
Cultural awareness	"*I am now thinking about my next negotiation. It's with Brazilians, and Brazilians, they love football, so we can say that the metaphor will be a football match, where the goal is to finish tied.*"	P14
Getting noticed	"*Of course, in fact a negotiation is also about seducing the person in front of you. You have to know how to get noticed, how to be appreciated, how to develop an image.*"	P02
Risk of mis-understanding	"*Well, afterwards it's always possible to make a blunder, you say something that you shouldn't have said and so on, but for me, these are also the risks.*"	P06

Three participants talked about how they used metaphors following a completed negotiation (see Table 10). Two of them stated that metaphors helped them to establish and maintain a good relationship with former negotiation partners even after the negotiation had ended. One participant described how a metaphor can help to implement a deal agreed in a negotiation.

Table 10: Experiences of using metaphors after a negotiation

Use	Quotation	Participant
Shaping relationship after negotiation	"*Yes, because I think that if you manage to make them understand you with the metaphor, then you open a relationship of trust with the person, they understand you, and you will see them connect with you. But also, with the metaphors, sometimes you don't know how the person is going to take the goal outside, right? So, I think that yes, it [a metaphor] can help you to, let's say, strengthen the relationship as long as the person receives it as you are transmitting it to them.*"	P08
	"*Yes, absolutely, for example, I could talk to you about a metaphor about the foundation of a building so that the building can withstand earthquakes. This construction must be solid. In relation to the negotiation, it is the same, I think that both parties must be solid and satisfied, which could then perhaps lead to a future partnership.*"	P10
Shaping implementation of outcome	"*I think that well, I took the universe as a bit of a reference and finally it means that many planets are to be taken into consideration. The conclusion must be a good alignment of the different planets. That is to say not too close so that it does not burn and not too far because otherwise, there will be no more heat, so we must find a good alignment with the right distances so that the universe continues to live without one burning the other.*"	P15

Discussion

The analysis enabled us to ascertain whether specific types of metaphors occurred more frequently within particular communication contexts. What we mean by saying that a metaphor occurs in a certain communication context is that the metaphor or its explanation by the respondents refers to one of the four communication contexts identified and defined by Adair *et al.* (space, time, relationship, or message). Process metaphors predominantly manifested in temporal communication contexts but also, to a much lesser degree, in spatial contexts. Relationship and party metaphors emerged exclusively in the relationship context with just one exemption of a relationship metaphor that was assigned to the spatial context. The occurrence of global metaphors exhibited a less discernible pattern, with one appearing in a message context, and others in spatial or other contexts. These findings align well with the existing literature: process metaphors inherently relate to temporal aspects, while relationship metaphors naturally find their place in relationship contexts. An interesting observation is that, overall, the majority of metaphors surfaced in spatial and relationship contexts. This suggests that negotiators often direct their attention toward the relationship when conceptualizing a negotiation or visualize a negotiation as a space.

If we compare the metaphors that emerged in our analysis with the four dominant themes and metaphors identified by Cohen (2001a: 32) – "industrial relations, engineering, Christian theology, and sports and games" – we can conclude that the only overlapping theme is games and sports. In our data, the metaphor of chess emphasized the importance of having your own strategy in a negotiation, and the metaphor of yoga stood for a win-win potential: wanting both sides to be happy. While Cohen (2001a) explained the frequent occurrence of sports and games metaphors by the desire of negotiators to play by the rules and by a long-standing tradition of playing competitive sport and games in English-speaking countries, our respondents viewed sport as not necessarily competitive. A potential explanation for these differences can be the research context: Cohen

derived the four themes from the English language, as opposed to French, Hebrew, or Arabic, while our sample was more culturally diverse. Our findings also expand the literature with the following themes: relationship, party, outcome, process, and negotiation in general (labelled as "global"). These findings show how diverse negotiation metaphors can be and call for further investigation of them in different cultural and professional contexts.

As to the uses of metaphors, our analysis reveals a distinct pattern, where metaphors employed prior to a negotiation predominantly surfaced in a relationship context, closely followed by temporal and spatial contexts. Metaphors employed during a negotiation were more difficult to assign. They spanned all four communication contexts, with a minor preeminence within the relationship context. The application of metaphors after a negotiation was almost exclusively confined to a relationship context. These findings yield insights into the utilization of metaphors by negotiators. Before and after a negotiation, the negotiators we interviewed predominantly situated their conceptualization within a relationship context, whereas during a negotiation, they employed metaphors across diverse communication contexts.

Our literature review and results indicate the relevance of the temporal aspect of the use of metaphors in the proposed theoretical model. Metaphors were used before, during, and after a negotiation for various purposes: for example, to build trust and set up a venue before a negotiation, to communicate effectively and to improve the atmosphere during a negotiation, and to make sense of the results and to maintain a relationship after a negotiation. Yet, these uses were not sufficient to build into consistent patterns in our findings, and the temporal perspective was not a salient aspect of our data collection by design. Future research can further explore how metaphors are used before, during, and after a negotiation, and how they can influence negotiation processes and outcomes.

Theoretical contributions

Our principal theoretical contribution arises from being the first empirical study that systematically examines metaphors extracted from qualitative interview data through the lens of Adair *et al.*'s (2016, 2024) theory of contextual dimensions of communication. This approach expands the boundaries of Adair *et al.*'s framework to encompass the domain of metaphors used in negotiation contexts. As such, our main theoretical contribution lies in the integration of different literature streams which haven't been combined before: the literature on negotiation (e.g., Brett & Thompson, 2016), the literature on metaphors (e.g., Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and the literature on communication contexts (Adair *et al.*, 2016).

A second contribution to the literature on metaphors and negotiation is based on our finding establishing the positive role of metaphors regarding the integration and summary of information within a negotiation setting (Deetz & Mumby, 1985; Hartel & Savolainen, 2016; Ziemkiewicz & Kosara, 2008). This underscores the potential of metaphors as effective linguistic tools for facilitating communication, a critical undertaking for the success of any negotiation endeavor. Participants' numerous examples depicting the capacity of metaphors to enhance communication enrich both metaphor theory and the negotiation literature. However, participants also illuminated a potential risk in that improper use of metaphors could potentially lead to misunderstandings in negotiations.

A third contribution of our study lies in the evidence we have provided regarding negotiators' use of metaphors as mental models (O'Brien & Albrecht, 1992; Radvansky *et al.*, 1993). Participants illustrated how metaphors played a positive role in aiding them to visualize and

structure their thoughts, particularly when preparing for upcoming negotiations. Moreover, these metaphors were instrumental in cultivating desired mindsets and positively influencing the emotional dynamics within negotiation meetings. Beyond this, participants articulated how the mental model reflected by metaphors aided in nurturing enduring and constructive relationships with former negotiation counterparts beyond the negotiation itself. These narratives establish the constructive utilization of metaphors as mental models, thereby advancing both the realm of mental model theory and the negotiation literature on effective preparation, execution, and post-negotiation engagement.

A fourth theoretical contribution lies in the identification of certain metaphors that emphasize either the integrative and/or problem-solving aspect of negotiation (e.g., the metaphors dance, happy marriage, shaking hands, two-way street, story, mountain to climb, etc.,) or the distributive/competitive aspect of negotiation (e.g., the metaphors war, battle, sports competition, win-lose, show me the money, etc.). Metaphors in those two groups can be regarded as representatives of the integrative and distributive approached to negotiation (e.g., Brett & Thompson, 2016; Gunia *et al*., 2016) but also relate to the functions of value-claiming and value-creation (Allred, 2000; Craver, 2010) as discussed in the literature on negotiation strategy.

A fifth theoretical contribution of our study is its multicultural dimension. In their recent review of negotiation research, Boothby and colleagues (2023) call for developing a more flexible approach to deal with the inevitable uncertainty and nuances when negotiating with people from different cultures. Our study makes an attempt to develop such an approach by exploring and making sense of the experiences and perceptions of negotiators who have been exposed to multiple cultures.

Practical implications

Based on our findings, we make six recommendations for negotiators in relation to the use of metaphors in negotiation. When making those recommendations, it is important to note that the first two recommendations are aimed at the use of metaphors in general. The remaining three recommendations focus on specific functions of metaphors within a negotiation process. All recommendations are based on the views expressed by the negotiators we interviewed:

1. Based on our findings, we recommend negotiators to think about negotiations in terms of metaphors that stress the integrative and/or problem-solving aspect of negotiation, such as the metaphors dance, happy marriage, shaking hands, two-way street, story, mountain to climb, etc. At the same time, we caution negotiators to employ overly competitive and/or distributive metaphors, such as the metaphors war, battle, sports competition, win-lose, show me the money, etc., in the context of a negotiation.
2. The use of metaphors carries the risk of facilitating misunderstandings. To effectively mitigate this risk, we propose the practice of actively explaining and discussing a metaphor with the negotiating counterpart at the point of its introduction. This proactive approach serves to enhance shared understanding and foster more effective communication.
3. We advise negotiators to reflect on the metaphors they employ and encounter throughout a negotiation process. By actively contemplating the nature, origins, and potential impacts of these metaphors, negotiators can learn how to use metaphors to influence the negotiation outcome. Recognizing and understanding one's own metaphoric language and thought is a crucial step towards the effective use of metaphors within a negotiation.

4.   We recommend the use of certain metaphors as a tool for synthesizing information during negotiation processes. What we mean by that is that negotiators may benefit from preparing metaphoric descriptions of particularly complex points that need to be addressed during a negotiation. For instance, in a scenario where the opposing party grapples with the complexity of a technically demanding subject matter, employing a metaphor can enhance their grasp of the issue at hand.

5.   We found some evidence that the use of certain metaphors by negotiators can positively influence the emotional atmosphere of negotiation meetings. On that basis, we recommend the use of metaphoric language to positively influence otherwise dense and/or heated atmospheres in negotiation discussions.

6.   Negotiators should also consider the possibilities of negative effects of using metaphors. One such negative effect is that metaphors might limit the thinking or mislead cognition. For example, the metaphor of war may trigger the fixed-pie bias and prevent negotiators from identifying integrative potential. Further, metaphors can be used as a manipulation tool. For example, metaphors such as balance or two-way street may incentivize negotiators to make more concessions. Another potential negative effect is the misinterpretation of metaphors, especially in multicultural environments.

Limitations and future research

Due to the qualitative nature of our research design and a sample size of 20 negotiators with only three female participants, our findings hold limited generalizability. Although our thematic analysis achieved saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015), alternative interviewee samples might have yielded different outcomes. This limitation is intrinsic to our chosen methodology, which aimed to capture rich field data instead of a large representative sample. Qualitative studies elucidate human experiences but lack broad generalizability. Their value lies in understanding individual, subjective perspectives, such as those of professional negotiators in our case, through detailed descriptions of their cognitive and symbolic actions, and through the richness of meaning associated with self-observed behavior.

Secondly, translation bias is probable, given the majority of our interviews were conducted in French and Spanish and then translated into English. To mitigate this, we adhered to established translation guidelines (Regmi *et al.*, 2010).

Thirdly, while we have analyzed our data with a view to identify a salient pattern between negotiators' own cultural background and the metaphors they use, we were not able to establish any meaningful patterns. For this reason, we decided not to include this analysis in the manuscript. This may be explained by either our relatively small sample size or the fact that we interviewed people with multicultural backgrounds implying that cultural differences in the use of metaphors may have been less pronounced.

Lastly, our results reflect views solely from negotiators, lacking input from their negotiation counterparts. This precludes verification of the reported efficacy of using metaphors. Social desirability bias may further compound this limitation, as participants might underreport negative experiences in relation to the use of metaphoric language or overreport instances of successfully uses, influenced by a desire to manage impressions.

In terms of future research directions, our exploratory analysis of professional negotiators' perspectives on the use of metaphors in negotiation has unveiled a range of metaphors that warrant deeper exploration through experimental studies. Specifically, our attention has been drawn to the

potential causal effects of frequently mentioned metaphors, such as dance, sports game, battle, landscape, etc. in relation to the facilitation of communication as well as the management of emotions during negotiation meetings. Based on our study, these metaphors have emerged as potential candidates for either independent predictors or mediators in explaining the success or failure of communication efforts and attempts to manage the atmosphere during a negotiation.

More specifically, it may be interesting to conduct an experiment in which subjects are asked to: 1) familiarize themselves with a metaphor randomly drawn from a set of four metaphors (e.g., battle, sports competition, dance, and marriage); 2) use that metaphor as a guiding principle in a negotiation role play exercise; 3) conduct the role play exercise; 4) report the objective (economic) value of the outcome of the role play exercise; and 5) report the subjective value of the outcome of the role play exercise. In such an experiment, the type of metaphor would act as an independent variable, whereas the economic and subjective value of the outcome would act as dependent variables respectively. Based on our study, one might hypothesize that the subjective and objective value of the outcome differ depending on the type of metaphor the subjects were primed with. For instance, one might suspect that priming subjects with more integrative metaphors (such as the metaphors dance or marriage) result in a higher joint economic value and higher subjective value compared to more distributive metaphors (such as battle or sports competition).

Another experiment based on our study, could investigate the effect of metaphors on the emotional environment of a negotiation. For that purpose, one could prime subjects with a certain metaphor (e.g., the metaphor battle or the metaphor marriage), ask them to conduct a negotiation exercise, and then compare their evaluation of the emotional environment during the role play with the evaluations of an un-primed control group of subjects.

Another future research project could investigate if and how the use of metaphors changes over the course of a negotiation or in relation to the specific context of the negotiation. For instance, one could have participants recall specific negotiation situations where they used or were mindful of a particular metaphor and explain how that metaphor influenced their planning, tactics, and outcomes etc. Such a project would be capable of capturing the dynamic aspects of metaphors, as opposed to the more stable aspects of metaphors that we investigated in our study.

Lastly, a potential research initiative could center on the use of metaphors in multicultural and multilingual negotiations. Given that only a limited subset of participants engaged in multicultural negotiations, but a large number commented on the cultural dimension of metaphors, a study dedicated to comprehending negotiators' perspectives on culture's impact on metaphors in a negotiation context could be beneficial. This study would explore views, experiences, and responses of negotiators regarding the influence of culture on the use of metaphors.

Conclusion

The findings of our qualitative interview study confirm that professional negotiators use metaphoric language within negotiations. When doing so, they use a range of different metaphor types, such as metaphors related to the negotiation process, the parties, the relationship, the outcome, or the globality of a negotiation. Complementing existing studies on metaphoric language in negotiation, we were able to empirically show that the predominant use of metaphors occurs in a contextual relationship or spatial dimension of communication as opposed to a message, or time, context. Further, the study found initial evidence for some positive effects of using metaphors in negotiations: facilitating communication, positively influencing the emotional

environment, and acting as helpful mental models in the preparation and follow-up of negotiation meetings.

The principal practical take-aways for negotiators from our study are: 1) When negotiating, it may be beneficial from the perspective of a negotiator to use metaphors that emphasize the integrative and/or problem-solving aspects of negotiation; 2) To improve the effective use of metaphors in negotiation, it may be useful to critically reflect on the types, origins, and uses of one's own metaphors; 3) Certain metaphors may useful for summarizing and integrating information in the context of negotiation; 4) Certain metaphoric language may be used to improve the atmosphere in a negotiation meeting or to get across a difficult point.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introductory question

1) Please, introduce yourself:
   - What is your name?
   - What is your nationality?
   - In which company are you working?
   - What is your current role?
   - For how long have you been in this role?

Metaphors in negotiation

2) If you had to describe a negotiation as a picture/image/metaphor, what would that look like?
3) If you think about an upcoming negotiation, can you describe, how the picture/image/metaphor you described earlier:
   - Influences the way you prepare for the negotiation?
   - Influences the way you approach and conduct the negotiation?
   - Influences the outcome of the negotiation?
4) Have you ever used a picture/image/metaphor in your actual negotiations? If yes:
   - Which pictures have you used?
   - How often do you use them?
   - Do you communicate them to your counterpart?
   - Does it influence your relationship after the negotiation?
5) Apart from the picture/image/metaphor you just described, are there any other pictures/images/metaphors that come to your mind when you think about negotiation?
6) When you think about the pictures you described earlier in the interview, where do you think they come from?
7) Do you think these pictures/images/metaphors are related to:
   - Your cultural background? Can you explain?
   - The cultures you have been exposed to? Can you explain?
   - Your negotiation training? Can you explain?
   - Your negotiation experience? Can you explain?