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Review

Personality in negotiation revisited: Recent advances and future directions

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Influential voices long dismissed individual differences as irrelevant to negotiation research. Recent calls to examine the process in its full complexity invite a renewed look at personality in negotiation. We take stock of the evidence using three complementary lenses: *When* does personality matter across contexts, outcomes, and phases? *With whom* does personality matter in interaction, including partner and fit effects? *How* should researchers design studies and measures that can recover stable personality effects in interdependent settings? Across these lenses, recent advances suggest that trait effects are most detectable in phase-proximal behaviors (e.g., initiation and preparation), are frequently contingent on counterparts and situational affordances, and may be especially worthwhile to examine for subjective, relational, and reputational outcomes that shape what happens after agreement. Methodologically, designs that separate actor, partner, and relationship components and capture trajectories rather than endpoints are especially informative. We outline future directions aligned with phase-specific theory, dyadic mechanisms, and innovative methods. We highlight emerging tools, including computational measurement and agent-based paradigms, that should accelerate cumulative progress.

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Background

In a comprehensive review published at the turn of the millennium, Bazerman et al. [1] claimed dispositional influences on negotiation are negligible arguing that across "hundreds of investigations," individual differences "typically do not explain much". Elfenbein [2] concluded, in the wake of their review, that the study of negotiator individual differences had been "nearly abandoned". But viewed instead through a comprehensive lens of all aspects of the complex social bargaining process, subsequent research increasingly reveals progress toward understanding personality in negotiation [3,4].[a] We join Boothby et al. [5] in stressing the need to study negotiation in full complexity: as a domain in which subjective and relational outcomes can be as consequential as economic outcomes [6], as a recursive multi-phase process [7], and as an interdependent system shaped by reciprocal influence [3].

We build on this view by asking why personality effects—effects stemming from relatively enduring characteristics and behavioral tendencies [b]—may have been underestimated. Three complementary lenses organize our answer, illuminating recent advances that help detect these effects. First, *when* traits matter: Personality effects may be most visible in particular situations, outcomes, and phases of negotiation. Second, *with whom* traits matter: Negotiators affect, select, and elicit responses in each other, so traits may operate through actor, partner, and dyadic effects. Third, *how* traits can be detected: Novel paradigms may deconstrain the very behaviors through which personality is expressed. Table 1 previews this three-lens roadmap.

[a] While this review synthesizes recent conceptual and methodological developments, we provide an overview of personality traits studied in negotiation, along with recurring findings in Table S1 in the Appendix.

[b] Following the American Psychological Association, we use personality to refer to an enduring configuration of characteristics and behavior that helps determine future behavior [8]. Individual differences relate to the broader category, including personality as well as abilities, motives, values, social preferences, and other stable or semi-stable characteristics that differentiate negotiators.

Table 1

A three-lens roadmap for studying and detecting personality effects in negotiation.

Lens	Focus	Core idea and implication for the field	Recent advances	Future directions
When?	**Context**	Personality effects are conditional on situations that may activate, mute, or reverse trait effects, so trait × situation tests are often more informative than main effects.	[14–18]	Vary situational cues and constraints to map situational moderators.
	Outcomes	Negotiation success is more than economic value, so traits may shape post-negotiation satisfaction, trust between negotiators, and negotiators' reputations.	[6,19,22,23]	Pair economic terms with relational, subjective, or post–deal outcomes.
	Phases	Trait effects are particularly relevant in negotiation phases before bargaining begins (initiation, planning, partner selection) and after agreement (implementation).	[14,26,27,29]	Study full negotiation cycles with trait effects across phases.
With whom?	**Interdependence**	Negotiators affect each other in interdependent ways, so personality operates through actor, partner, and dyadic effects.	[35,38,41–43]	Use dyadic, round-robin, and repeated bargaining designs.
How?	**Design and measurement**	Constrained paradigms and simplified designs can hide personality effects by limiting trait expression.	[39,45,46]	Capture behavioral traces, repeated interactions, and field settings.

Note. Personality effects become clearer when negotiation is studied (i) across relevant contexts, phases, and outcomes (when), (ii) as an interdependent process between counterparts (with whom), and (iii) with designs that allow trait expression and adequate analysis thereof (how). References are illustrative rather than exhaustive; more detailed future directions are discussed in the main text.

When do traits matter? Situation, outcome, and phase specificity

Negotiation researchers often focus on dyadic bargaining. This narrowing (i) precludes contextualized personality influences, (ii) underweights subjective, relational, and downstream outcomes, and (iii) ignores phases before and after direct bargaining. As our first lens, we therefore illuminate recent evidence on personality effects in negotiations across contexts, outcomes, and phases.

Situational affordances and constraints shape trait expression

Negotiation situations encompass features that interact with traits. The situation–trait–outcome activation (STOA) perspective emphasizes that dispositions influence not only behavior within situations but also the selection and shaping of situations [9]. Dispositions yield trait × situation patterns rather than simple main effects [10]. As in recent organizational research [11], this perspective implies that negotiation settings differ in affording trait expression. Distributive settings may better afford assertive, competitive tendencies but can penalize agreeableness. Integrative potential may better afford openness, perspective-taking, and transparent information sharing conducive to value creation [12,13].

Empirically, negotiation settings with high situational constraint attenuate personality–behavior links [14] or shift which personality traits matter [15,16]. Macro-level features can also re-order consequences of behavior often treated as broadly effective. For example, whether anger "pays" in intercultural negotiations depends on structural leverage and the counterpart's personality orientation (action-vs. state-oriented; [17]). Finally, investigations of a negotiator's flexibility rather than average trait levels illustrate that personality variability across situations can predict negotiation success [18]. Scholars should therefore model how negotiation contexts shape trait expression by integrating situational affordances and constraints into study designs. Cataloging these moderating effects will likely improve generalizability.

Negotiation success: economic value is only one criterion for personality effects

The concept of and primacy accorded to "economic value" in negotiation research overlooks fuzziness in that construct outside the context of payoff charts imposed by experimenters. Relegating relational outcomes to peripheral status obscures personality effects. For example, personality predicts subjective experiences of actors *and* partners more reliably than it predicts point payoffs [19]. Furthermore, the essence of temporally extended and/or repeated negotiation [6] is reflected in satisfaction, trust, perceived fairness, relationship quality, ethicality, and reputational consequences. These social, psychological, and subjective outcomes draw on distinct predictor sets. They could trade off with "economic value", highlighting how

"winning" experimental points can incur relational cost that impacts downstream welfare and reputation [20–23].[c]

Understanding personality effects thus requires more emphasis on subjective and relational factors, along with a clearer understanding of what we mean by "objective" and "economic". Experimenters, who impose and then assume [d] uniform internalization of values, should pair payoff charts with validated subjective/relational measures [20] and, where feasible, post–deal indicators such as implementation actions, future dealings, or reputational assessments [25]. To analyze the effect of personality traits, future research should broaden the definition of negotiation success beyond narrow economic outcomes by systematically incorporating relational indicators that carry through implementation and compound across repeated interaction [6].

Negotiation is a multi-phase process

Negotiation generally begins before direct bargaining. People decide whether to negotiate, whom to approach, and how to prepare. Standard paradigms with assigned partners and explicit negotiation cues remove these moments of selection and initiation, even though they may be central loci for personality effects. Personality effects cohere when negotiation is examined across phases: (i) vetting counterparts, getting to the table, and preparation; (ii) bargaining, claiming and creating value (see sections 2.1 and 2.2), and (iii) implementation of terms while managing post–deal relationships.

The pre-bargaining phase is quite important. Negotiation propensity cannot be reduced to situational opportunity alone [26]; it is associated with personality traits, ideology, and motives [27–29]. Moreover, negotiators actively sort into partners and situations based on anticipated value and relational considerations [30,31]. Preparation also shows trait-linked patterns: conscientiousness predicts persistence (e.g., spending longer on the planning task) and prioritization of negotiation-relevant information [32], while conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness predict more extensive information search [14]. Thus, this phase is a vital locus for personality expression in negotiations.

Most negotiation experiments presume instantaneous, costless, and perfect implementation of terms yielding precisely valued outcomes (e.g., Ref. [33]). In field contexts, however, implementation unfolds over time. It alters realized value relative to expectation at signing, so outcomes reflect post-agreement behavior, not just initially agreed terms [34]. Employment negotiation illustrates that process: a common simulation [35] models employer and employee outcomes as immediate, fixed, and easily calculated. Yet realized economic and relational consequences of "new recruits" vary widely on multiple dimensions over extended time frames. Organizational research documents robust personality effects on employer-relevant outcomes after agreement, including job performance, contributions beyond contractual obligations (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior [OCB]), and psychological contract breach (PCB) [36,37].[e] Thus, labor markets are one particularly relevant context in which personality shapes the interpretation, implementation, and outcomes of negotiated agreement. Examining other contexts, such as mergers, supply chain, or real estate, could establish generalizability.

With whom do traits matter? Dyadic fit and interaction effects

Because negotiation outcomes are inherently interdependent, personality is often more informative in interaction than isolation [3]. As our second lens, we therefore review evidence decomposing negotiation behavior and outcomes into actor, partner, and relationship components, examining how dyadic configuration shapes negotiation. Empirical evidence adopting complementary dyadic designs supports this relational process view. Elfenbein et al. [38] show that *dyadic interaction* effects explain more variance in economic outcomes than do individual differences, whereas individual differences explain more than twice as much variance in subjective outcomes. Likewise, Elfenbein et al. [39] find substantial actor effects, moderate partner effects, and clear dyadic reciprocity (i.e., pairwise convergence) in negotiation behavior across multiple partners. Amistad et al. [19] demonstrate actor × partner interactions, such that agreeable actors do worse (vs. better) when paired with low (vs. high) honesty–humility counterparts.

More broadly, dyadic configurations often predict negotiation dynamics more clearly than single-trait main effects [35,40]. Agreeableness and extraversion similarity predicts smoother interactions and better relationships [35,41]. Congruent low-trust-propensity dyads can achieve higher joint gains through increased scrutiny [42], and homogeneous social value orientation dyads cooperate more [43]. However, dyadic fit is not uniformly beneficial. Dominance similarity deters

[c] The economic relevance of relational outcomes (ERRO; [6]) provides a useful perspective for specifying focal "non-economic" outcomes. In high-ERRO contexts, for example, economic value hinges on what happens after agreement (e.g., effort, cooperation, future deals).

[d] Contrast this presumptive social psychological method with the extensive steps experimental economists take to "induce" rather than impose value functions on participants. Fewer assumptions about value likely contribute to greater replicability for experiments in that field [24].

[e] Please see Pletzer and Abrahams [11] for more details in the organizational context. Among others, conscientiousness of a "new recruit" reliably predicts job performance, while conscientiousness and extraversion predict OCB. New recruits with higher levels of dark triad personality traits generate expected economic value at contract signing that is not realized due to "quiet quitting", withdrawal, theft, or workplace aggression.

information exchange leading to less integrative agreements than dominance complementarity [40]. Whether trait similarity or complementarity leads to better negotiation results appears to depend on the trait, outcome, task structure, and alignment between personality and preferences [44]. Research on negotiator personality should model these interdependencies to fully capture negotiation dynamics. It should also identify when personality similarity versus complementarity drives outcomes, using longitudinal and network-based approaches that can integrate situational and preference variables.

Capturing effects: relaxing constraints on designs, models, and measurement

The third lens asks why personality effects can be difficult to detect even when they exist. The field's neglect of personality partly reflects early conclusions drawn from limited designs with narrow outcome definitions and underpowered tests [1]. Beyond that, some apparent "null" personality effects in negotiation may reflect a mismatch between phenomenon, study design, and analytic procedures: common paradigms confound stable actor tendencies with partner-specific variance and task constraints. Detecting such effects requires designs that separate actor, partner, and relationship components while capturing interaction trajectories. Round-robin designs address this identification problem by disentangling variance structure (i.e., making these components visible) and separating actor, partner, and dyadic components of negotiation behavior [39]. Thus, scholars need to adopt designs that treat negotiation as dynamic and interdependent.

Evidence from broader syntheses and field studies reinforces this point. Sharma and colleagues' [45] meta-analysis revealed that numerous individual differences (including cognitive ability, emotional intelligence, and multiple personality traits) predict negotiation outcomes. Effects in laboratory studies that appear modest, become consequential when negotiations are repeated, relational outcomes accumulate, or small advantages compound over time. Field data show stronger associations than laboratory studies and highlight interactional properties of certain traits, such as ambition and likability, in predicting negotiation effectiveness among attorneys [46]. More field studies with richer outcomes or less constrained settings will help clarify when cumulative effects become practically meaningful.

Future directions

Having reviewed recent evidence from three complementary lenses—when personality effects arise, with whom they emerge, and how to detect them, we note three directions for future research.

From endpoints to mechanisms: language and behavioral trajectories

A first priority is shifting from predicting outcomes to specifying mechanisms by measuring how personality influences what negotiators actually do—for example, in language, timing, and responsiveness [47–49].[f] Computational measures can translate interaction micro-processes into variables connecting traits to perceived intent, trust, and willingness to continue bargaining. Recent work in electronically mediated paradigms illustrates the promise of trace-like mechanisms, such as word count [16], linguistic affect [35], or hedging [51], as predictors of relational outcomes. Longitudinal designs with repeated interactions can also link traits to emergent properties (e.g., reputation; [23]) recovering stable signals amid interaction noise [52].

AI and agent-based paradigms as theory testbeds

Second, LLM-based agents in simulation environments can stress-test negotiation theories at scale [53,54]. Agent paradigms can thereby accelerate theory refinement by systematically identifying which mechanisms remain robust across varied phase structures, task features, and counterpart preferences or behaviors [55]. These simulations also make it possible to treat an agent's "persona" (or personality-like behavioral orientations) as a manipulable design factor [56]. By this, researchers could test whether different agent dispositions systematically shift value claiming versus value creation, relational outcomes, and counterpart responses [57,58].

Beyond dyads: teams and multiparty negotiations

Third, teams and coalitions conduct many consequential negotiations [15,59,60]. As Boothby et al. [5] highlight, "interacting in groups is categorically different from interacting in dyads — in terms of information processing, strategy, conversational dynamics, and interpersonal dynamics" (p. 318). Personality composition and within-team dynamics shape preparation, strategy, and relational climate [61], and studying team contexts can connect individual differences to emergent collective behavior [62]. Work on teams in negative bargaining zones illustrates how collective structure can facilitate impasse [63], while frameworks on team personality composition clarify how individual differences aggregate into team-level tendencies [64]. Future research can integrate our framework here as well: phases (coordination, preparation, bargaining, implementation), interdependence (within- and between-team), and methods (multi-actor designs with trace measurement).

[f] The density distributions model [50] could offer a sensible approach for linking trait personality levels to observable behaviors in negotiations (i.e., across situations and partners).

Teams also bridge to multiparty bargaining and coalition formation. Multiparty complexity often compels negotiators toward formalized procedures—pre-meetings, opening statements, agenda setting, and decision rules—to stabilize what might otherwise degenerate into chaos. Political science models of coalition formation and voting rules offer tools for examining multiparty dynamics [65,66]. Studying how personality interacts with power features such as agenda control and veto threats should yield insights about coalition stability and outcomes.

Conclusion

Nearly abandoned as a subject matter, personality effects in negotiation appear increasingly tractable. Meta-analyses, improved measurement, and more powerful designs indicate robust though possibly conditional effects. Personality traits show phase-specific associations with negotiation behavior, experience, and outcomes. Further progress depends on embracing negotiation as a multi-phase, interdependent process rather than relying primarily on simple, highly constrained bargaining tasks. Novel methods including round-robin tournaments and longitudinal repeated-interaction paradigms can separate actor, partner, and relationship components to recover stable signal amid interaction noise. Field research can temper monomethod bias and enable observation of full negotiation cycles, including team negotiations or implementation efforts. Thus, what once "typically did not explain much" increasingly can—when individual differences are studied at the right phase, with the right counterpart, and with designs capable of detecting interdependence.

CReDiT author statement

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2026.102365.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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Further information on references of particular interest

3. ** Proposes the relational process model of negotiation, arguing that individual differences operate through selection into counterparts and contexts, expectancies that shape interpretation and strategy, and trigger-based responses that elicit different reactions to the same behavior across partners. The model integrates actor, partner, and relationship dynamics and clarifies why trait effects are often conditional rather than uniform.

18. * Shifts the focus from average trait levels to within-person variability ("personality variability") as an individual-difference construct relevant for dynamic bargaining. Shows that variability predicts both economic gains and satisfaction, consistent with the idea that negotiations reward adaptive regulation across interaction turns. Useful as a bridge between personality states/variability and negotiation outcomes.

22. * Demonstrates exemplarily how dark personality traits are linked to greater endorsement of inappropriate negotiation strategies, partly via lower relational interdependent self-construal. Highlights a "money versus relationship" trade-off: traits can predict ethically and relationally consequential behaviors even when final economic outcomes are ambiguous. Good example for broadening "negotiation success" beyond settlement terms and economic value.

32. ** Provides phase-specific evidence that conscientiousness shapes negotiation outcomes by influencing preparation: more persistent planning effort and greater prioritization of negotiation-relevant information predict downstream value claiming. Conscientiousness matters through a measurable and behavioral preparation-to-performance pathway, supporting the multi-phase lens.

35. * Shows that similarity in interpersonal traits (e.g., agreeableness, extraversion) predicts negotiation dynamics through emotional displays: dyads with greater similarity use more positive emotional language, which predicts faster agreement and better relational impressions. A clear demonstration that dyadic configuration can shape process and relational outcomes, not merely economic terms.

39. ** Uses a robust round-robin design and behavioral coding to decompose negotiation behavior into actor consistency, partner elicitation, and dyadic reciprocity. Finds that negotiators show stable behavioral signatures across counterparts, counterparts reliably elicit behaviors, and pairs converge via reciprocity, directly supporting an interdependent "who you negotiate with" account of personality effects.

42. * Applies a dyadic congruence approach to show that trust propensity fit predicts joint outcomes in a nuanced way: congruent low trust propensity can improve joint gains on trade-off/compatible issues while leaving distributive outcomes unchanged. A useful example that fit effects can reflect vigilance/scrutiny mechanisms rather than simple prosociality.