

## Liu et al. (2012): The Dynamics of Consensus Building in Intracultural and Intercultural Negotiations

This research paper elaborates the dynamics of consensus building in intracultural and intercultural negotiations in the form of mental model convergence. The authors point out that consensus is easier reachable in intracultural settings, but effects of culture always depend on the epistemic and social motives of the involved parties. Two effects are influencing consensus building for negotiating dyads: *Need for closure* inhibits and *concern for face* fosters consensus building for intracultural dyads. In the following main aspects are summarized.

### Introduction

- Negotiation as communicative exchange → (re)defining terms of interdependence.
  - Consensus making as basis for economic success in negotiations.
  - People from varied cultures have systematic differences regarding cognitions and values.  
→ Mental models of people from different cultures are more likely to be different.
  - Need for closure = Form of epistemic motivation.  
→ Need to reach conventional & stable judgments.
  - Concern for face = Form of social motivation.  
→ Concern the relations with others.
- } Influence quality of outcome.

### Consensus building and cross-cultural negotiations

- Grounding = How parties interact and come to a common understanding of the situation.  
→ Critical cause “all collective actions are built on common ground and its accumulation”.
- Mental model as cognitive representation to make sense of a situation.  
→ Reflect a holistic and specific cognitive experience.
- Consensus building as process to reach greater similarity of mental models.  
→ This is essential for negotiation, because greater similarity means better understanding, fosters feelings of coherence, control, and predictability and collective efficiency. And finally creates a greater basis for exchange (rises trust and cooperation).
- Negotiation as joint decision-making process to allocate resources under conditions in which negotiators have divergent preferences and utilities.
- Culture as “loose network of domain-specific cognitive structures” (including theories, beliefs and systems of thinking).

### Motivation and Culture in Mental Models

Need for closure: Leads individuals to seek answers that concur with the group consensus.

- Lack of flexibility in dealing with uncertainty.
- Seize and freeze information early on during social interaction.
- High NFC leads to fade-out of information inconsistent with the own mental model.
- High NFC leads to stereotypical judgments towards culturally distant others.
- High NFC makes it difficult to reach agreement, and especially in intercultural settings.

Concern for face: Motivation to enhance one’s public image and to avoid a loss of reputation.

- Face as representation of a claimed sense of self in a relational situation.
- Universal phenomenon: Everyone prefers to be respected and benefits from self-respect.
- Higher CFF indicates higher level of personal relatedness, relationship orientation and social sensitivity.
- CFF encourages pro-social behavior and attention to others. → Leads to more information absorption.

### Discussion:

- NFC on consensus and outcomes and CFF more pronounced in cross-cultural negotiation.
- Effects of cultural differences depend on the adaptability of the individuals’ mental models, which is driven by epistemic and social motives.
- This paper advances the dynamic constructivist approach.

For practice:

- Most important factor for cross-cultural negotiation: How open people are to change perceptions of the situation.
- Selection of people to negotiate: People which are open to change their culture.

- Cultural intelligence as prime factor which affects consensus building.
- The greater the CFF the better.
- The lower the NFC the better.