



## People, Process, and Substance: Current Definitions on Negotiation

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### Abstract

This article provides an extensive literature review on Negotiation definitions. The aim was to broaden the current epistemology on the field of research. The subject has also attracted increasing scholar attention over the past 40 years. Despite the tremendous technological advancements regarding the internet era, researchers still face ink-and-paper-format challenges when gathering direct quotations. In some cases, most prominent and cited research is charged. Many researchers are limited to the digital libraries subscribed by their educational institutions. Therefore, this research will be beneficial to scholars, and practitioners in general, because it gathers in a single study the most critical direct quotations on Negotiation definitions within the past few decades. Key findings pointed to common factors such as people, process, and substance within the N=30 quotes investigated. Some of the quotes were available online, scanned as pictures - without the possibility of word search; the oldest ones were retrieved exclusively from the ink-and-paper format. Both cases were the hardest to retrieve. Resulting citations were compared and investigated through content analysis. Finally, discussion and future research compile the present work.

**Keywords:** negotiation, literature review, current epistemology, direct quotations

### Introduction

This article addressed the current epistemology on Negotiation and presented N=30 definitions on Negotiations. This investigation was conducted through comprehensive literature review and will be helpful to scholars, professors, negotiation students of all levels, negotiators, managers, mediators, and practitioners, amongst others, because it gathers in one single paper, sparse data hard to retrieve in the majority of cases.

First, the ink-an-paper culture, which prevailed until the advent of the internet - the late 1990s, was not substituted or even disappeared completely. The oldest references are the hardest to find. Much data was retrieved from physical documents, solely.

The past literature review was conducted primarily inside Libraries. Researchers were limited to the physical availability of information within the library premises. Sometimes the desired research items source was not available because someone else took it in advance.

To date, with the tremendous virtual research resources and abundant digital data bases - hosted mainly in virtual domains, the research arena shifted from the real to the virtual world.

However, retrieving secondary data is not always an easy and pleasant task, as it seems. The most relevant and cited research digital sources are not for free downloads) some merely make the abstracts available), in turn addressing another challenge: sometimes the researcher is restricted to the annual subscriptions acquired by the Educational Institution in which a fellow researcher is attached.

Moreover, if a researcher does not have a digital database available, the only way to pursue literature reviews are: (a) to download free research online; (b) to pay for online research; (c) to search in public libraries or other sources, such as book collections. For example, this research would have a cost of

approximately USD 1,080. In average, the cost per article download varies from 15 to 45 USD, by the occasion this article has been written.

The oldest sources are the trickiest to investigate. Many of them are available for free online, but they were scanned like pictures, which prevents navigation within the document by word editors, for instance. Many of these documents cannot be digitalized from picture to document, through the technology Optical character recognition or optical character reader (OCR). Hence, documents should be read one by one, which increases exponentially the time consumed in the literature review, in comparison to quick web search.

Therefore, the current research gathered, analyzed, and discussed N=30 definitions on Negotiations as direct quotations, out of 162 references investigated. Therefore, the current research gathered, analyzed and discussed N=30 definitions on Negotiations as direct quotations, out of 162 references investigated.

The word negotiation comes from Latin *nego*, deny, *otium*, leisure, meaning leisure denial (Salacuse, 2006) <sup>[83]</sup>. The British Philosopher Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) dedicated one of his *Essays* to the virtues of negotiating through third parties, for instance (Bacon, 2000). The French diplomat François de Callières (1645-1717), describing the science of negotiation through third parties: "(...) He (*the prince*) <sup>[1]</sup> must use good workers who know how to implement them to win hearts and the will of men (*for the sake of the King*), and this is mainly the science of negotiation." Callières, pp. 2006

<sup>1</sup> Italics added in this paragraph.

[1716], pp.b 13 14) <sup>[2]</sup>. Negotiation has been widely studied over the last decades, under different perspectives: negotiation as a political game (Kissinger, 1969) <sup>[71]</sup>; conflict (Zartman, 1988) <sup>[89]</sup>; as a game (Raiffa, Richardson & Metcalfe, 2002; Ruben and Brown, 1975; Pruitt, 1981) <sup>[80, 81, 79]</sup>; communication process (Acuff, 1993; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981; Salacuse, 2003, 2006; Lax and Sebenius, 1986; Shell, 2006) <sup>[1, 70, 82, 72, 86]</sup>; as a social interaction (Dias, 2016; Schatzki & Coffey, 1981) <sup>[60, 85]</sup>; as a decision making process (Bazerman and Moore, 1994) <sup>[3]</sup>; as social-psychological aspects (Neale & Northcraft, 1991; Druckman, 1997; Thompson, 2001; Moore and Woodrow, 2010; Cohen, 2007; Patton, 2012) <sup>[77, 68, 88, 76, 7, 78]</sup>, for instance.

Roughly speaking, in the 1970s negotiation has been influenced by game theory; during the 1980s, influenced by behavior and decision theories. During the 1990s, the negotiation was heavily influenced by social psychology theories.

Negotiation has been applied in many different scenarios: Role play simulations (Dias, M.O. 2019, 2019a; Dias, M.O. and Albergarias, 2019, 2019b; Dias, M. O. & Teles, 2018) <sup>[22, 45, 65]</sup>; carmaker industry (Dias, M. O., Navarro and Valle, 2013, Dias, M. O., *et al.*, 2014; Dias, M. O., *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[56, 48, 59]</sup>; retail business (Dias, M. O., *et al.*, 2015; Dias, M. O. *et al.*, 2015, 2014) <sup>[25]</sup>; copier manufacturer industry (Dias, M.O., 2012); Non-governmental organizations (Paradela,; Dias, M. O.; Assis; Oliveira, J.; Fonseca, R. (2019) <sup>[65]</sup>; aircraft manufacturer industry (Dias, M., Teles, and Duzert, 2018; Dias, M.O. and Duzert, 2018) <sup>[36, 56]</sup>; governmental business relations (Dias, M. O. & Navarro, 2017) <sup>[25]</sup>; mining industry (Dias, M. O., & Davila, 2018) <sup>[56]</sup>; e-business negotiation (Dias & Duzert, 2017) <sup>[25]</sup>; generational interactions (Aylmer & Dias, M. O., 2018) <sup>[65]</sup>; public negotiators (Dias, M. O., 2018) <sup>[65]</sup>; (d); (e) non-market forces (Dias & Navarro, 2018) <sup>[56]</sup>; beer industries (Dias, M.O. and Falconi, 2018; Dias, M. O., 2018); streaming video industry (Dias, M. O., & Navarro, 2018) <sup>[26]</sup>; civil construction (Dias, M.O., 2016) <sup>[36]</sup>; debt collection negotiations (Dias, M.O., 2019, 2019b; Dias, M.O. and Albergarias, 2019) <sup>[69, 45]</sup>; cooperative societies in general (Dias, M.O., Ribeiro and Albergarias, 2019; Dias, M.O. 2019h Dias, M.O. & Teles, 2019; 2019b; Dalacosta, Dias, M.O, Meirelles, 2019; Dias, M.O., 2018; Dias, M.O & Craveiro, 2019; Dias, M.O, Krein, Streh, Vilhena, 2018; Dias, M.O. & Ramos, 2018; Dias, M.O & Teles, 2018) <sup>[56, 45, 12, 47, 59, 85, 26, 34, 74, 19, 87, 52]</sup>.

## 2. Methods and Research Limitations

Methodology employed here is single methods approach, rooted in extensive literature review on negotiation. It is inductive reasoning, interpretive, qualitative research. N= 30 negotiation definitions are displayed in the following section, out of N=162 secondary sources investigated, primarily books and articles, both printed and electronic versions. Search engines such as Google, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia. edu were used as the main reference basis. Digital

<sup>2</sup> French original: “(...) il faut qu'il se serve de bons ouvriers qui sachent les mettre en œuvre pour lui gagner les cœurs et les volontés des hommes, et c'est en cela principalement que consiste la science de la négociation.”

data basis such as J store, Emerald, SAGE, among others, was employed too. The research was conducted between august 5 to 29, 2019. Finally, data were investigated under relevance to the field of research criterion and is displayed from the oldest to the newest, for better understanding and secure storage.

N=30 Negotiation definitions were then separated in groups, compiled 1,094 words, and later coded. The emerging codes were used to assemble a matrix to be further analyzed through content analysis approach (See Figure 1). Resulting word cloud is displayed in Figure 2. The raw data were processed on Nvivo 11, including word cloud. The purposive sample chosen has been cited in an increasing number of articles, through direct or indirect quotations.

The subject Negotiation and their definitions limit this study. Other fundamental definitions, such as distributive, integrative negotiations, mediation, facilitation, auctions, agents, among others, are not related to the scope of the present research. Next section presents the Negotiation definitions (findings), further analyzed and discussed.

## 3. Findings and Negotiation Definitions

This section provides N=30 negotiation definitions, direct quotations from different sources. Key findings suggested that people, process, and substance were the common factors to all definitions. Interestingly, evidence suggested recent scholars' preference define negotiation through indirect quotations instead of the right ones or using past direct quotations (eventually the most cited ones). The Negotiation definitions are organized from the oldest to the newest, numbered from #1 to #30. They are organized in this way to facilitate analysis (See Fig. 1).

### Negotiation Definitions

**Definition #1:** Negotiation is “a process of combining conflicting positions into a common position, under a decision rule of unanimity” (Kissinger, 1969, p.1) <sup>[71]</sup>.

**Definition #2:** “Negotiation refers to a process in which individuals work together to formulate agreements about the issues in dispute. This process assumes that the parties involved are willing to communicate and to generate offers, counter-offers, or both.” (Rubin and Brown, 1975, p.461) <sup>[81]</sup>.

**Definition #3:** It is the use of information and power to affect behavior within a “web of tension.” (Cohen, 1980, p.4) <sup>[6]</sup>.

**Definition #4:** “Negotiation is a “form of decision making in which two or more parties talk with one another in an effort to resolve their opposing interests (Pruitt, 1981, p. xi) <sup>[79]</sup>.”

**Definition #5:** Negotiation is “an exchange between people for the purpose of fulfilling their needs.” (Schatzki & Coffey, 1981p.18) <sup>[85]</sup>.

**Definition #6:** “Negotiation is a process of communicating back and forth for the purpose of reaching a joint decision” (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981, p. 20) <sup>[70]</sup>.

**Definition #7:** Negotiation is “a process of potentially opportunistic interaction by which two or more parties, with

some apparent conflict, seek to do better through jointly decided action than they could otherwise” (Lax and Sebenius, 1986, p.11) <sup>[72]</sup>.

**Definition #8:** Negotiation is “a process of combining conflicting positions into a common position under a decision rule of unanimity, a phenomenon in which the outcome is determined by the process” (Zartman, 1988, p.31) <sup>[89]</sup>.

**Definition #9:** “Negotiation involves several key components including two or more parties to a negotiation, their interests, their alternatives, the process and the negotiated outcomes (Neale & Northcraft, 1991, p. 232) <sup>[77]</sup>.

**Definition #10:** “Negotiation involves discussion between the parties with the goal of reaching agreement.” (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992, p.532).

**Definition #11:** “Negotiating is the process of communicating back and forth for the purpose of reaching a joint agreement about differing needs or ideas” (Acuff, 1993, p.6) <sup>[1]</sup>.

**Definition #12:** “When two or more parties need to reach a joint decision but have different preferences, they negotiate.” (Bazerman and Moore, 1994, p. 151) <sup>[3]</sup>.

**Definition #13:** “Negotiation is a key form of interaction in systems composed of multiple autonomous agents.” (Sierra, Jennings, Noriega, & Parsons, 1997, p. 177) <sup>[87]</sup>.

**Definition #14:** “According to the Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, to negotiate is “to hold intercourse with a view to coming to terms, to confer regarding a basis of agreement”. Despite its apparent straightforwardness, this definition has taken on a variety of meanings, especially during the past thirty years. Some view the process of negotiating as a puzzle to be solved, others see it as a bargaining game involving an exchange of concessions, some consider it a way of reconciling differences within and between organizations, and still others think of it as a means for implementing governmental policies.” (Druckman, 1997, p.11) <sup>[68]</sup>.

**Definition #15:** “Negotiation is an interpersonal decision-making process necessary whenever we cannot achieve our objectives single-handedly (Thompson, 2001, p.2) <sup>[88]</sup>.

**Definition #16:** “Negotiation is a joint decision-making process in which parties, with initially opposing positions and conflict interests, arrive at a mutually beneficial and satisfactory agreement. It normally includes dialogue with problem-solving and discussion on merits, as well as bargaining and the exchange of concessions with the use of competitive tactics.” (Albin, 2001, p.1) <sup>[2]</sup>.

**Definition #17:** “Negotiation, in contrast, involve multiple individuals cooperating to arrive at a joint decision. The joint decision entails joint consequences, or payoffs, for each individual.” (Raiffa, Richardson & Metcalfe, 2002, pp. 6-7) <sup>[80]</sup>.

**Definition #18:** Negotiation is a “process of communication by which two or more parties seek to advance their interests or those of the persons they represent through an agreement on the desired future action” (Salacuse, 2003, p. 11) <sup>[82]</sup>.

**Definition #19:** Negotiation is “a process of communication by which two or more persons seek to advance their individual interests through joint action.” (Salacuse, 2006, p. 7) <sup>[83]</sup>.

**Definition #20:** “Negotiation is an interactive communication process that take place whenever we want something from someone else or another person wants something from us”. (Shell, 2006, p.6) <sup>[86]</sup>.

**Definition #21:** Negotiation “is a process involving parties with both common and conflicting interests who come together voluntarily in an attempt to arrange or adjust their future relationship. It occurs when two or more players without the same preferences try to make a joint decision.” (Cohen, 2007, p. 116) <sup>[7]</sup>.

**Definition #22:** “Negotiation involve procedures by which parties exchange each other tangible items (money, land, goods, or behavior) or intangible items (trust, respect, apologies, retraction of a statement or curse) to meet individual or jointly defined substantive, procedural or psychological interests or needs.” (Moore and Woodrow, 2010, p-14) <sup>[76]</sup>.

**Definition #23:** “Negotiation can be defined as a back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement between two or more parties, with some interests that are shared and others that may conflict or simply be different.” (Patton, 2012, p.279) <sup>[78]</sup>.

**Definition #24:** “Negotiation is a dialogue between two or more people or parties, intended to reach an understanding, resolve point of difference, or gain advantage in outcome of a dialogue, to produce an agreement upon courses of action, to bargain for individual or collective advantage and to craft outcomes to satisfy various interests of two parties involved in negotiation process. Negotiation is a process where each party involved in negotiating tries to gain an advantage for themselves by the end of the process.” (Čulo, & Skendrović, 2012, p. 323) <sup>[8]</sup>.

**Definition #25:** “Negotiation is a technical method aimed at finding a common ground at divergent positions through a solution that satisfies the parties involved” <sup>[3]</sup> (Mery, 2013, p. 1) <sup>[75]</sup>.

**Definition #26:** Negotiation is “an ethical and elegant process of rational and collaborative decision making aimed at mutual benefits” (Duzert, 2015, Introduction, paragraph 1)

**Definition #27:** “Negotiation, a way to resolve conflicts or

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<sup>3</sup> French original: “La négociations est une méthode technique visant à trouver un terrain d’entente à des positions divergentes par le biais d’une solution qui satisfasse les parties en présence.” (Mery, 2013, p.1)

disagreements or divide resources among two or more parties, carried out willingly by free choice. The two sides make contact for suggestions and counter suggestions and in this manner, communication takes place between the parties. Each side employs its own tactics in an effort to reach maximum results.” (Zohar, 2015, pp. 540-541) [90].

**Definition #28:** Negotiation “refer to win-win situations such as those that occur when parties are trying to find a mutually acceptable solution to a complex conflict”. (Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2016, p.3) [74].

**Definition #29:** “Negotiation is the process by which two or

more parties who perceive a difference in interests or perspective attempt to reach agreement.” (Malhotra, 2016, p.5) [73].

**Definition #30:** Negotiation is defined as “a social interaction process, which involves two or more persons, regarding their interests, identity, and cognition, and dedicated to reaching an agreement over the substance negotiated through mutual gains.” (Dias, M.O., 2016, p.29) [56].

The overall N=30 definitions were condensed in Figure 1, to illustrate their common factors or attributions better, as follows:

Def. #	References / Authors	Process				People/ Parties	Substance		Information	Power / Tactics	Behavior
		Position/ Conflict	Communication	Decision-making	Exchange/ Interaction/ Relationship		Intangible Interests, Needs or Ideas	Tangible Land, goods, property, assets			
1	Kissinger, 1969, p.1	*		*		*	*	*			
2	Rubin and Brown, 1975		*	*		*					
3	Cohen, 1980, p.4	*				*	*	*	*	*	
4	Pruitt, 1981, p. xi			*		*	*				
5	Schatzki & Coffey, 1981p.18				*	*					
6	Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981, p. 20		*			*					
7	Lax and Sebenius, 1986, p.11			*	*	*	*	*			
8	Zartman, 1988, p.31	*		*		*	*	*			
9	Neale & Northcraft, 1991, p. 232			*		*		*			
10	Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992, p.532		*		*	*		*			
11	Acuff, 1993, p.6		*			*	*	*			
12	Bazerman and Moore, 1994, p. 151			*	*	*		*			
13	Sierra, Jennings, Noriega, & Parsons, 1997, p. 177				*	*					
14	Druckman, 1997, p.111	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
15	Thompson, 2001, p.2			*		*		*			
16	Albin, 2001, p.1	*		*	*	*	*	*			
17	Raiffa, Richardson & Metcalfe, 2002, pp. 6-7			*		*		*			
18	Salacuse, 2003, p. 11		*			*		*			
19	Salacuse, 2006, p. 7		*			*		*			
20	Shell, 2006, p.6		*			*		*			
21	Cohen, 2007, p. 116	*	*	*	*	*		*			
22	Moore and Woodrow, 2010, p.-14				*	*	*	*			
23	Patton, 2012, p.279		*			*		*			
24	Čulo, & Skendrović, 2012, p. 323		*		*	*	*	*			
25	Mery, 2013, p. 1	*				*		*			
26	Duzert, 2015, Introduction, paragraph 1			*		*		*			
27	Zohar, 2015, pp. 540-541	*	*			*	*	*	*		
28	Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2016, p.3	*		*		*		*			
29	Malhotra, 2016, p.5		*		*	*		*			
30	Dias, M.O., 2016, p.29			*	*	*	*	*			

**Fig 1:** Negotiation definitions coded.

Findings presented earlier were gathered from the oldest to the newest available (See Fig. 1). Then, raw data were separated

into groups and further analyzed and coded with Nvivo 11. The list of codes and respective subcodes is shown in Table 1, as follows:



influences from past research in the definitions. Regarding the People/parties factor, which appears in all definitions, analysis evidenced the absence of artificial intelligence conducting negotiations. Findings suggest Negotiation as social interaction, involving parties or people as active participants on such a process.

Analysis if evidence also suggests, on a smaller scale, different goals to pursue: some tangible interests, some intangible assets (especially those influenced by social psychology). However, tangible assets or objectives were present in all N=30 definitions, while intangible assets were present in only n=12 definitions (40 percent). This evidence suggests that intangible assets may be perceived secondarily by past research, since social psychology influence is somehow recent if compared with other influences, such as decision-making or game theory, for instance.

## 5. Discussion

As stated in the Introduction, this research was undertaken in order to provide an extensive literature review on Negotiation definitions. N=30 definitions were presented, organized from the oldest to the newest available, later coded and analyzed through content analysis, suggesting three significant factors or dimensions constant to the majority of definitions: process, people and substance.

Despite the enormous technological advancements on knowledge codification, storage and dissemination after the advent of the internet, some challenges remain to the current researchers: dealing with remaining ink-and-paper sources (even the electronic ones) is time-consuming and sometimes an exhausting task.

Moreover, while there is a trend of universalization of digital knowledge, many academic sources created a market niche for content commercialized. As a consequence, individual researchers do not have free access to high-quality articles because they are expensive to acquire. Some articles may vary from USD 15 to USD 40, each. As a possible consequence, the increase in piracy rates should be expected. To avoid such pitfalls, Educational Institutions have been expanding their digital databases, to provide high-quality papers to researchers.

An important implication is that future researchers will spend less time searching current definitions on Negotiations, once the most cited are gathered in one single paper. In this sense, this work is unique and helpful for scholars, students, and practitioners in general, because it solves one difficulty of gathering information from different sources, mostly available under strict circumstances, here compiled, structured, analyzed and further discussed. Another implication is the debate on current epistemology over the subject here investigated.

Finally, Negotiation is a process that involves decision-making, communication, exchange, social interaction, by which people seek to advance their interests and substances, tangible or not, through joint agreement. All these factors combined set the pace for human evolution.

## 6. Future Research

Future work will expand the number of Negotiation definitions. Researchers are encouraged to study other

relevant definitions regarding the field of research. Future work also should expand the study of Negotiation multidisciplinary influences over time, to define precisely which fields of research are linked to the overall definitions, expanding even further the current epistemology on the subject. Quantitative studies on the impact of definition on researches also could provide insights into the usage of negotiation definitions in literature reviews.

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