



# Psychological Perspectives on Gender in Negotiation

## Citation

Bowles, Hannah Riley. 2012. Psychological Perspectives on Gender in Negotiation. HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP12-046, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

## Published Version

<http://web.hks.harvard.edu/publications/workingpapers/citation.aspx?PubId=8638>

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# **Psychological Perspectives on Gender in Negotiation**

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**October 2012**  
**RWP12-046**

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## **Psychological Perspectives on Gender in Negotiation**

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Draft chapter to appear in:  
M.K. Ryan, & N.R. Branscombe (Eds.)  
The Sage Handbook of Gender and Psychology

Total Word Count: 11,002 (including references)

### **Author Note**

Research for this chapter was supported by funds from the Harvard Kennedy School Center for Public Leadership. I am appreciative for the excellent research assistance of Raafi Alidina and Julia Kamin. I also grateful for insightful comments on my drafts from the editors and from Debbie Kolb, Laura Kray, Mara Olekalns, Katie Shonk, and Alice Stuhlmacher.

## **Psychological Perspectives on Gender in Negotiation**

A fundamental form of human interaction, negotiation is essential to the management of relationships, the coordination of paid and household labor, the distribution of resources, and the creation of economic value. Understanding the effects of gender on negotiation gives us important insights into how micro-level interactions contribute to larger social phenomena, such as gender gaps in pay and authority. Recent research on gender in negotiation has shown us how gender stereotypes constrain women from negotiating access to resources and opportunities through lowered performance expectations and gendered behavioral constraints. However, this widening research stream is also beginning to provide hints for how individuals and organizations can overcome these limitations to women's negotiation potential.

In this chapter, I provide a brief history of psychological research on gender in negotiation, starting with the study of gender-stereotypic personality attributions and transitioning to a more sophisticated analysis of the effects of gender stereotypes on negotiation behaviors and performance. I review contemporary research on gender in negotiation using two interrelated frameworks. The first outlines the ways in which gender stereotypes influence negotiation, the second outlines situational factors that help predict when gender effects are likely to emerge in negotiation. These include ambiguity, which facilitates the emergence of gender effects, and gender triggers, which influence the salience and relevance of gender within the negotiating context. Finally, I highlight practical implications of research on gender in negotiation and point to future research directions that could transform insights about barriers to women's negotiation performance into positive levers for change.

### **A Brief History of the Theoretical Development of Gender in Negotiation**

The story to date of the psychological study of gender in negotiation starts and ends with gender stereotypes. Initially, researchers anticipated that gender would function like a personality variable, predicting men's and women's negotiation behavior and performance in gender-stereotypic ways. Namely, women would be relationship-oriented cooperators, and men would be analytically minded competitors. If men and women fulfilled these expectations, then male negotiators would be more effective than female negotiators at "claiming value" (i.e., gaining a larger share of the value to be divided) and potentially also at "creating value" (i.e., searching for trades that expand the value to be divided; Lax & Sebenius, 1986). However, women might be more reliable advocates for peace in a conflict situation (Maoz, 2009). Early scholars of gender in negotiation had little success substantiating these stereotypes as consistent predictors of men's and women's negotiation performance, but contemporary scholars have shown that these gender-stereotypic expectations continue to thrive, sometimes to virulent effect.

In the first comprehensive review of research on gender in negotiation, Rubin and Brown (1975) reported a confusing array of results in which women were sometimes more cooperative than men but at other times defied expectations by acting significantly more competitive. In particular, they observed that women's behavior seemed to be more contingent than men's on the behavior of the other negotiator; for instance, women struck back more forcefully than men against perceived defection. Sticking with the premise of gender as trait, Rubin and Brown tentatively proposed that women's personalities might make them less predictable than men, such that they are more "interpersonally oriented" and, therefore, less analytic and more reactive to their counterparts' behavior. Rubin and Brown's chapter stood for more than two decades as the primary statement on the topic of gender in the negotiation field.

During the 1980s, while social psychologists were developing theories of gender as a social role (Eagly, 1987) and contextual phenomenon (Deaux & Major, 1987), mainstream negotiation scholars disregarded gender as a failed personality variable. In the mid-1990s, psychological researchers started paying that more attention to the social construction of gender in negotiation. Informed by advances in psychological research on gender in social behavior, they started investigating situational factors that might moderate gender effects in negotiation.

Walters, Stuhlmacher, and Meyer (1998) published a path-breaking meta-analysis of gender and negotiation behavior. Synthesizing 35 years of research, they found a modest overall tendency for women to be more cooperative negotiators than men. However, this effect was driven by the results of face-to-face negotiations and did not appear to extend to anonymous bargaining exercises, such as matrix games, in which parties are typically physically separated and make a parsimonious set of behavioral choices with differential expected payoffs (e.g., “cooperate” or “defect” in the Prisoner’s Dilemma). They proposed that the potential for stereotype conformity increased with the potential for communication between negotiators (e.g., greater conformity in face-to-face interactions than in written or scripted ones).

Stuhlmacher and Walters (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of 21 studies of explicit negotiations over issues, such as sales or compensation (i.e., no matrix games). They found that men negotiated higher individual payoffs than did women, but also observed preliminary evidence that stereotypic gender differences might be greatest in masculine-stereotyped negotiations (e.g., compensation or car sales) and when negotiation roles align with gender-stereotypic status differences (e.g., male employer, female candidate). These meta-analyses stoked researchers’ curiosity about when, why, and how gender effects in negotiation emerge.

During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, research on the content and implications of gender stereotypes in negotiation became an important research area. Kray and Thompson (2004) published an extensive qualitative review of the literature, theorizing that stereotypes were the root of gender effects in negotiation. Informed by their own work on stereotype fulfillment and reactance in negotiation (Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002; Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004; Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001), they argued for a situational approach to the study of gender in negotiation. In their review, they illustrated ebbs and flows of gender effects across negotiation contexts. With the benefit of stronger psychological theory and empirical evidence than was available to Rubin and Brown (1975), they swept aside the notion of gender as a personality type and argued for deeper investigation of how stereotypes influence negotiation performance.

### **Gender Stereotypes in Negotiation: Use, Fulfillment, Reactance, and Policing**

The contemporary literature on gender in negotiation can be seen in terms of four ways in which gender stereotypes influence negotiation behavior. In this section, I first report on evidence that negotiators *use* gender stereotypes as strategic information. Second, I illustrate how negotiators *fulfill* the prophecies of gender-stereotypic expectations. Third, I explain how negotiators sometimes also *react* to gender stereotypes by defying gendered behavioral expectations. Finally, I present evidence of gender-stereotype *policing and conformity*, which is particularly constraining for female negotiators.

#### **Use of Gender Stereotypes as Strategic Information**

The stereotypes of male and female negotiators align with the broader stereotypes that men are agentic and women communal (Eagly, 1987): male negotiators are expected to be relatively self-interested and competitive, whereas female counterparts are expected to be more

other-concerned and cooperative (for reviews, see Eckel, de Oliveira, & Grossman, 2008; Kray & Thompson, 2004). Multiple studies suggest that negotiators use these gender stereotypes to infer what type of counterparts they are facing, what type of constituents they are representing, and how they themselves are likely to be perceived—“tough” like a man or “soft” like a woman.

**Offer behavior.** This strategic use of gender stereotypes is sometimes reflected in negotiators’ offer behavior (i.e., initial proposals and the exchange of counterproposals). In both laboratory experiments and field studies, researchers have found that negotiators adjust their offers depending on whether they are negotiating with a man or a woman. For instance, in two studies of the Ultimatum Game,<sup>1</sup> researchers found that negotiators offered more money to men than to women and were willing to accept offers for less money from men than from women (Solnick, 2001; Solnick & Schweitzer, 1999). As one researcher observed, “players seem to expect that women would be satisfied with a smaller share” (Solnick, 2001, p. 199).

Ayres and Siegelman (1995) demonstrated a similar pattern of gender discrimination in negotiation offers in a field study of 153 new-car dealerships. The researchers matched confederate male and female, White and Black buyers for appearance and trained them to use standardized bargaining scripts. Pairs of confederates were matched to negotiate separately for the same car at the same dealership within a couple of days of one another, such that one confederate was always a White male (total 306 negotiations). Results showed that car dealers systematically offered lower car prices to male than female and to White than Black buyers.

In an Israeli-Palestinian peace-negotiation simulation conducted with Jewish-Israeli university students, Maoz (2009) hypothesized that negotiators would be more receptive to peace proposals that came from female than male opponents because stereotypes suggest women are

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<sup>1</sup> The Ultimatum Game is an exercise that models the last round of a negotiation. Party 1 makes an offer to Party 2 for how to divide a resource (e.g., ten dollars). Party 2 then decides whether to accept the offer. If Party 2 accepts the offer, the agreement stands. If Party 2 rejects the offer, neither party gets any of the resource.



more willing to compromise than men are. As hypothesized, negotiators rated identical proposals more favorably when they came from female than male opponents. They also ascribed more warmth, less assertiveness, and somewhat more trustworthiness to female than male opponents.

Adding more nuance, Kray, Locke, and Van Zant (in press) studied how women's self-presentation as flirtatious or simply friendly would influence negotiators' offer behavior. They found that participants made less generous offers to women who appeared stereotypically warm and friendly than to those who appeared flirtatious. The findings of multiple studies suggested that feminine warmth is more of a liability than flirtatious charm because warmth signals a lack of competitiveness and concern for self. There were no comparable effects for men.

**Misrepresentation.** Another implication of the agreeable feminine stereotype is that negotiators perceive the risks associated with lying to female negotiators to be lower than with male counterparts (Kray, 2012). Kray conducted an archival analysis of deception in a real-estate-sale simulation used in a business school negotiation course over three semesters. In this particular simulation, it is advantageous for the buyer to mislead the seller about the intended use of the property. Kray found that buyers admitted lying to female sellers at a rate three times higher than to male sellers. Corroborating evidence of buyer lies revealed the same statistically significant pattern of gender discrimination but suggested that the students lied more frequently than they admitted in the self-reports. The gender effects were starkest in the case of outright lies about the intended use of the property following the sale.

**Persistence.** Bowles and Flynn (2010) analyzed the implications of gender stereotypes for negotiation persistence in male, female, and mixed-gender pairs. They took a dyadic perspective to show that the strategic use of gender stereotypes not only concerns attributions made about negotiating counterparts (e.g., female = cooperative and therefore more yielding;

male = competitive and therefore more obstinate) but also depends on the gender match or mismatch within the negotiating pair. The strategic implications of being paired with a cooperatively typed (e.g., feminine-stereotyped) or competitively typed (e.g., masculine-stereotyped) negotiator differs if the negotiator is competitively or cooperatively typed him- or herself. For instance, cooperatively typed negotiators (e.g., women) may anticipate collaborative encounters with others they type as cooperative but potentially exploitative interactions with those they type as competitive. In contrast, competitively typed negotiators (e.g., men) gain less from discriminating between types because their type is likely to invite competitive behavior from both competitive and cooperative types (Kelley & Stahelski, 1970).

Bowles and Flynn (2010) ran two experiments in which participants interacted with naysaying negotiation counterparts (i.e., parties who refused to budge). As predicted, women persisted more strongly in negotiations with male than female naysayers (i.e., more with competitively than cooperatively typed counterparts), whereas counterpart gender had no effect on men's persistence behavior. This research suggests that negotiators use gender stereotypes not only to judge their counterparts but also to infer what others are likely to expect of them, and that these stereotype-based inferences influence fundamental negotiation behaviors.

**Constituent representation.** A final illustration of the influence of gender stereotypes comes from research on the effects of constituent gender. Pruitt, Carnevale, Forcey, and Van Slyck (1986) tested the effects of negotiating on behalf of a male or female confederate and manipulated whether the confederate observed the agent negotiate on his or her behalf (or not). They found no significant gender differences in the agents' negotiating behavior. However, they found that agents used more contentious bargaining behavior and negotiated more inequitable agreements when being watched (vs. not) by male constituents, and used more cooperative

negotiating behavior and achieved more equitable outcomes when being observed (vs. not) by female constituents. As the researchers summarized, “Stereotypes are a ready source of inferences about constituent expectations” (Pruitt, et al., 1986, p. 271).

### **Gender-Stereotype Fulfillment**

Research conducted on the premise that male and female negotiators would consistently live up to their gender stereotypes largely met with failure. However, in broad brushstrokes, we do observe weak patterns of women negotiating more cooperatively than men and of men competitively claiming a greater share of the negotiating pie than women. An important question in contemporary negotiation research has been how to explain when and why male and female negotiators are likely to fulfill gender stereotypes.

**Stereotype threat.** Kray and colleagues (2001) demonstrated that one psychological mechanism underlying gender effects in negotiation is “stereotype threat” (Steele, 1997; see Betz et al., this volume). Actors experience performance-inhibiting stereotype threat when they are aware of negative stereotypes about their group’s abilities in a personally important performance domain and feel that their performance in that domain is being evaluated. Negotiation is widely recognized as a critical management and business skill in which men have a stereotypic advantage over women.

Kray and colleagues (2001) investigated the potential for gender-stereotype threat in negotiation by manipulating whether MBA students had the impression that faculty could evaluate their innate negotiating abilities. They assigned mixed-gender pairs of students to play buyers and sellers in a biotechnology plant acquisition. Participants were either told that the simulation was simply a learning tool (low threat) or that it was diagnostic of their actual negotiating abilities (high threat). As predicted, when the negotiators believed that their

performance would be diagnostic of their negotiation abilities, women (as compared to men) reported lower expectations of their negotiation performance and negotiated less favorable sales prices. When negotiators believed the simulation was not diagnostic, the gender effects diminished (see also Tellhed & Bjorklund, 2011).

**Stereotype regeneration.** In subsequent studies, Kray and colleagues showed that they could manipulate associations between gender stereotypes and negotiation performance to produce effects that favored either men or women. For instance, Kray and colleagues (2002) identified verbal expressiveness, good listening, and emotional empathy as negotiation strengths associated more with women than men, and identified being well prepared, open minded, and good humored as gender-neutral negotiating strengths. MBA students participated in a negotiation that the researchers presented as diagnostic of “important managerial negotiation abilities” and that the researchers then linked to either the stereotypically feminine or gender-neutral negotiating strengths, as described. When high performance was linked to stereotypically feminine attributes, the female MBA students entered the negotiation with higher expectations and negotiated more favorable outcomes than did their male peers. When performance was linked to more gender-neutral traits, the gender effects reverted back to the traditional gender stereotype: male (vs. female) students had higher expectations and performance. Kray and colleagues (2002) also showed that linking gender-stereotypic traits to poor negotiation performance produced gender-correspondent underperformance in both male and female negotiators. In sum, one explanation for gender-stereotypic effects in negotiation is that gender-based performance expectations trigger “self-fulfilling prophecies” (Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978).

### Gender-Stereotype Reactance

Psychological reactance occurs when actors perceive others’ expectations as negatively

constraining and they protest by behaving contrary to those expectations (Brehm, 1966).

Researchers have demonstrated two conditions under which negotiators systematically defy gender-stereotypic expectations in this way. One involves the experience of being explicitly negatively stereotyped, and other involves heightened impression motivation.


**Explicit stereotyping.** As described above, Kray and colleagues (2001) showed that the subtle activation of gender stereotypes produces stereotype-consistent gender differences in negotiation performance. They also tested the effect of drawing an explicit connection between the negotiator's gender and their likely performance, hypothesizing that it would produce psychological reactance and counter-stereotypic negotiation performance. More specifically, they hypothesized that explicit stereotyping of female negotiators as inferior to male negotiators would motivate reactance in the female negotiators and reverse the gender-stereotypic pattern of male dominance in negotiation performance.

In two studies, Kray and colleagues (2001) linked negotiation performance to gender-stereotypic traits, specifically high performance to rationality and assertiveness and low performance to emotionality and passivity. The researchers then manipulated whether or not the negotiators were told that "Because these personality characteristics tend to vary across gender, male and female students have been shown to differ in their performance on this task" (Kray, et al., 2001, Studies 3 and 4). In both studies, exposure to the explicitly sex-discriminating message motivated female negotiators to increase their aspirations and improve their performance, ultimately reversing the male advantage in negotiation performance.

**Impression motivation.** Another potential mechanism of psychological reactance is impression motivation (i.e., concern that one's behavior will be perceived in a desirable way), because negatively stereotyped groups feel motivated to deny negative attributions about their

competencies (W. von Hippel et al., 2005). For instance, von Hippel and colleagues (2011) showed that women who experience stereotype threat about their leadership abilities adopt a more masculine communication style. This masculine style unfortunately backfires because it makes the woman less socially attractive and therefore less persuasive.

Curhan and Overbeck (2008) tested the effects of impression motivation in a candidate-recruiter job negotiation simulation. In a high impression-motivation condition, they told negotiators they would be rewarded or penalized based on their counterpart's impression of them. Students in the control condition received no impression-motivation information. Consistent with psychological-reactance theory, Curhan and Overbeck found that female negotiators in the recruiter role negotiated significantly more competitively (i.e., counter-stereotypically) in the impression-motivation condition than in the control condition. Interestingly, male negotiators did the inverse, negotiating more cooperatively under impression-motivation concerns. The results suggest that negotiators sometimes defy gender stereotypes when they anticipate that others will evaluate them in an unfavorable, gender-stereotypic way.

While liberating in some respects, the strategy of playing counter to the stereotype has its limitations. Curhan and Overbeck (2008) found that male negotiators who acted more cooperatively to create a better impression ended up with lower negotiation payoffs. Female negotiators who acted tougher to create a better impression earned higher negotiation payoffs but ironically created more negative impressions with their counterparts. 

### **Gender-Stereotype Policing and Conformity**

Gender stereotypes have both descriptive and prescriptive functions (Eagly, 1987; Burgess & Borgida, 1999). The descriptive function informs how we anticipate men and women *will* behave or perform (e.g., “men are more competitive and, therefore, better negotiators than

women”). As already discussed, negotiators use descriptive stereotypes to make attributions about counterparts and constituents, and descriptive stereotypes sometimes become self-fulfilling prophecies or targets of reactance for negotiators themselves. Prescriptive stereotypes relate to how we think men and women *should* act (e.g., “women should be selfless, not demanding”), and they inform what we think is appropriate negotiating behavior for men and women.

The application of prescriptive stereotypes gives rise to gender-stereotype policing, the protection and maintenance of gender stereotypes by penalizing those who deviate from their prescriptions, and conformity, socially motivated adherence to gender-stereotypic behavioral prescriptions. Research shows that policing creates a social motivation for female negotiators, in particular, to adhere to gendered behavioral norms to the detriment of their economic interests.

**Women’s compensation-negotiation dilemma.** Compensation negotiations are a domain in which there has been accumulating evidence of gender differences favoring men (Bowles & McGinn, 2008b). Some studies indicate that women are more reticent than men to negotiate for higher compensation (Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman, 2007). Others show that when negotiating pay, women (as compared to men) set lower aspirations, assert themselves less, and depart with poorer outcomes (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Barron, 2003; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Gerhart & Rynes, 1991; Stevens, et al., 1993). A burning research question has been to explain why these gender-stereotypic effects persist in such an economically important domain.

Research by Bowles and colleagues has shown that it is reasonable for women to be more reticent than men about negotiating for higher compensation because of the policing of prescriptive gender stereotypes (Bowles & Babcock, 2009, in press; Bowles et al., 2007). Compensation negotiations are more problematic for female than male negotiators because

making claim to greater monetary rewards for oneself violates prescriptions of the feminine stereotype. The pursuit of higher compensation aligns with the masculine stereotype of the agentic, breadwinning man, but it contradicts normative expectations that the communal woman be more concerned for others than for herself (Wade, 2001).

In multiple studies, Bowles and colleagues recruited participants to evaluate managers based on either a transcript or a video of a job placement interview. The participants rated their impression of the candidates and their willingness to work with them. The researchers manipulated the manager's gender and whether the manager negotiated for higher compensation. They found that evaluators were disinclined to work with female managers who negotiated for higher compensation (versus not) because they were perceived to be less nice, more demanding, and insufficiently concerned about organizational relationships. In contrast, negotiating had little effect on the evaluations of male managers (Bowles & Babcock, in press; Bowles, et al., 2007). This pattern of social resistance to female negotiators persisted even when the managers bargained for higher compensation on the basis of an outside offer, which is the most commonly advised explanation for negotiating for higher pay (Bowles & Babcock, 2009). In sum, women (more than men) face a dilemma in compensation negotiation, in which they have to weigh the social risks of negotiating against the potential economic benefits.

**Negotiating for self vs. other.** Gender-stereotype policing and conformity also help to explain why women perform better in negotiations in which they are advocating for others as opposed to themselves. Bowles et al. (2005) showed that women negotiate significantly higher compensation outcomes when advocating for others than for themselves. In two experimental studies, the women's negotiation outcomes when advocating for others rivaled, if not bested, the men's. Advocating for self versus other had no effects on the performance of male negotiators.





Amanatullah and Morris (2010) tested whether greater anticipated social backlash when negotiating for self (versus other) would explain this effect. They created a scripted compensation negotiation with a computerized confederate and manipulated whether negotiators were advocating for themselves or for someone else. Prior to the negotiation, participants indicated whether they anticipated backlash for appearing too demanding. The results showed that female negotiators advocating for themselves (vs. for others) made more modest compensation requests and were less likely to select assertive negotiating scripts among an array of bargaining-language options. Anticipated backlash explained the female negotiators' more reticent behavior in the self- versus other-advocacy conditions. Once again, advocating for self versus other had no significant effects on the negotiating behavior of male negotiators. In sum, when advocating for others, women have more liberty to negotiate forcefully, and gender differences in performance decline.

### **Summary of Gender Stereotypes in Negotiation**

Gender stereotypes have four categories of influences in negotiations. Negotiators *use* them as strategic information about the types of offers they should make or how cooperatively or competitively they should behave. Negotiators *fulfill* gender stereotypes, particularly when gendered performance expectations are subtly introduced in contexts in which negotiators feel they are being evaluated. Negotiators *react* to gender stereotypes by behaving in counter-stereotypic ways when they feel constrained by negative gender-stereotypic expectations. Finally, negotiators *police and conform* to gender stereotypes, such that women, in particular, become inhibited from asserting their self-interest or even entering the bargaining table.

## Predicting When Gender Stereotypes Will Influence Negotiation:

### Ambiguity and Gender Triggers

As illustrated in the previous section, the effects of gender stereotypes are sometimes contradictory. They wax, wane, and change direction across negotiation contexts, favoring men in many situations but women in others. As such, negotiation researchers face the challenge of understanding more deeply the role of situational factors in the manifestation of gender effects.

Two categories of situational factors help us to predict *when* gender is likely to influence negotiation. One is the *degree of ambiguity* within the negotiation context, which facilitates the emergence of gender effects. The other is the presence of *gender triggers*, which make gender relevant and salient within the negotiation context (Bowles, et al., 2005). Table 1 presents a summary of propositions about how particular forms of gender triggers and increased ambiguity might combine to increase the likelihood of gender-stereotype use, fulfillment, reactance, and policing and conformity.

### Ambiguity

Increased ambiguity within the negotiation context facilitates gender effects by “weakening” the psychological situation (Mischel, 1977). “Strong” situations operate like traffic lights, providing the same clear signal to all participants. Weak situations, in contrast, require improvisation and thereby create more potential for individual differences. When a negotiation situation is ambiguous, parties must search the environment and their own mental schema for cues for how to enact the negotiation. How am I expected to behave? What should my opening offer be? What are the appropriate standards for agreement? When searching for answers, gendered norms and stereotypes become a source of information about what to expect from others and from oneself.

Negotiation researchers have identified two types of ambiguity that facilitate gender effects: *structural ambiguity* about the substance of a negotiation (Bowles, et al., 2005) and *norm ambiguity* about standards of behavior (Kray & Gelfand, 2009). I also propose a third category, *type ambiguity*, which relates to how well negotiators and their counterparts or constituents know one another.

**Structural ambiguity.** Structural ambiguity relates to the degree of clarity negotiators have about the “zone of possible agreement” (Lax & Sebenius, 1986)—in other words, the issues to be resolved and the options available for resolving them—and appropriate standards for agreement. Increased structural ambiguity makes it less clear to negotiators what can be negotiated and what constitutes a good outcome, opening the door for gendered norms to answer these questions. Employing both archival data on MBA students’ job-market outcomes and laboratory-based negotiation experiments, Bowles et al. (2005) examined whether increased structural ambiguity would produce more gender-stereotypic negotiation outcomes.

In a study of the salary outcomes of graduating MBA students, Bowles et al. (2005) found a \$5,000 gender gap favoring men after controlling for more than 30 salary predictors (e.g., work experience, pre-MBA salary, dual-career concerns, etc.). We then asked career-services professionals to rate the ambiguity of salary standards in the industries in which the MBA students accepted positions. In industries that were judged to have clearer salary standards (low ambiguity)—which was 70 percent of sample—there were no significant gender differences in the salary offers accepted by graduating MBA students. In contrast, in industries with ambiguous salary standards, female MBA students accepted salaries that were ten percent lower than did their male peers. Importantly, there was as much variation in the salary outcomes in

low- as in high-ambiguity industries, but gender only explained the variance in the high-ambiguity industries.

Bowles and colleagues (2005) complemented these suggestive archival results with laboratory studies in which they manipulated structural ambiguity. Under high ambiguity (i.e., no clear agreement standards), there were significant gender effects on negotiation performance. Under low ambiguity (i.e., clear agreement standards), there were no significant gender effects. Again, structural ambiguity had no effect on the variance in outcomes; it only affected whether gender predicted negotiation performance.

**Norm ambiguity.** Norm ambiguity relates to the degree of clarity about what constitutes appropriate negotiating behavior. Kray and Gelfand (2009) examined whether increased norm ambiguity would produce more gender-stereotypic reactions to a compensation negotiation. They randomly assigned MBA students to respond to a scenario in which their first compensation request was either immediately accepted by the employer or in which there were several rounds of exchange of concessions before a compensation agreement was reached. Previous research suggested that the MBA students would feel less satisfied about the negotiation when their first offer was immediately accepted because a quick agreement would suggest they could have asked for more (Galinsky, Seiden, Kim, & Medvec, 2002). However, Kray and Gelfand hypothesized that, if it were unclear whether negotiating was socially appropriate (high norm ambiguity), having a first offer accepted would disappoint women less than men because prescriptive gender stereotypes make compensation negotiations more socially awkward for women than men (Bowles, et al., 2007). In other words, the women would experience “relief versus regret” when negotiating norms were unclear.

Kray and Gelfand (2009) manipulated norm ambiguity by providing or withholding information that negotiating for higher compensation was expected and tended to be viewed positively by employers as a critical business skill. Under low ambiguity (i.e., negotiating is normative), both male and female MBA students expressed more regret when their first offer was accepted as compared to when there was an exchange of concessions. Under high norm ambiguity, only male MBAs expressed more regret when their first offer was accepted.

It may have been particularly important to the effectiveness of Kray and Gelfand's (2009) low-ambiguity condition that they described the propensity to negotiate as a behavior that would be viewed positively. Small and colleagues (2007) tried to reduce ambiguity and gender differences favoring men in the propensity to negotiate by explicitly instructing study participants that they could negotiate for higher compensation for their participation. This information that "negotiation" was an option only increased gender differences in the propensity to negotiate. In contrast, when they told participants they could "ask" for higher compensation, gender differences diminished. Small and colleagues argued that "asking" fits better than "negotiating" with normative expectations for low-power behavior and is therefore less problematic for women.

**Type ambiguity.** I use the term "type ambiguity" to refer to a lack of clarity about the negotiating style, competences, or preferences of counterparts or constituents. To the best of my knowledge, no research has tested whether gender stereotypes are more influential when negotiating counterparts' or constituents' types are less well understood. However, it seems reasonable to posit that increased type ambiguity would heighten the potential influence of gender stereotypes, for at least three reasons. First, negotiators are more likely to try to discern information from their counterparts' or constituents' gender when these parties are unknown to

them. This is not to say that gender could not influence existing relationships or reputations, but rather that negotiators are less likely to individuate and more likely to use stereotypes when assessing less well-known others. Second, when negotiators believe that their own type is unknown to the other party, they may be more likely to anticipate that gender will influence others' expectations of their behavior (e.g., "They probably think I'll be nice because I am a woman"). Third, research suggests that men and women are more likely to fall into gender-stereotypic interactions when their relative competences for or potential contributions to group work are unknown (e.g., Wood & Karten, 1986). Gender-stereotypic behavior seems more likely the less parties understand about their respective negotiation or substantive expertise.

### **Gender Triggers**

There are four categories of situational factors known to moderate the salience and relevance of gender in negotiation. The first of these gender triggers is *stereotype activation*, the manner in which stereotypes are introduced in the negotiation context. The second is *role congruence*, the alignment of negotiating roles with gender-stereotypic behavioral expectations (i.e., gender roles, Eagly, 1987). The third is negotiators' psychological experience of *power* within the role and in the dyad, which can weaken or reinforce the gender status hierarchy. The fourth is the salience of *social cues* about negotiators' gender identities.

**Stereotype activation.** As elaborated above in the discussions of stereotype fulfillment and reactance, the influence of descriptive gender stereotypes on negotiation expectations and performance depends on whether the stereotype is subtly activated or explicitly named (Kray, et al., 2001). Negotiators are more likely to fulfill gender stereotypes when they hang "in the air" (Steele, 1997) in such a way that negotiators are aware of the stereotypes and their relevance to their own performance but are not directly confronted with them. This type of "implicit" gender

stereotyping is more virulent when negotiators feel they are being evaluated. In contrast, when gender stereotypes are explicitly linked to negotiation performance, negotiators are likely to react against them by negotiating in counter-stereotypical ways.

To the best of my knowledge, negotiation researchers have not tested directly how the activation of gender stereotypes influences either the use of gender stereotypes as strategic information or the policing and conformity to gender stereotypes. However, as proposed in Table 1, I hypothesize that subtle activation of gender stereotypes would heighten the potential for these two phenomena. The use of stereotypes as strategic information seems more likely if negotiators are primed to make gender-stereotypic associations; indeed, that is probably part of the dynamic of stereotype-threat effects on negotiation performance in mixed-gender pairs (Kray, et al., 2001). Likewise, the policing of gender stereotypes may be more pronounced if negotiators are more attuned to normative expectations for male and female negotiators.

**Role congruence.** Another potential trigger of gender effects in negotiation is the degree to which the negotiator's role corresponds with or contradicts the expectations of their gender role (Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, in press). This correspondence or contradiction contributes to gender differences in at least two ways. First, role incongruence could inhibit negotiators because a counter-stereotypic negotiating role is socially risky. For instance, self-advocating in a compensation negotiation is gender-role congruent for men but gender-role incongruent for women. Therefore, women tend to be penalized more than men for self-advocating for higher pay (Bowles et al., 2007). In contrast, advocating for someone else in a compensation negotiation is role congruent for both genders—for women as caregivers and men as chivalrous protectors (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al, 2005).

Second, negotiators may feel less confident about negotiating roles that have a perceived “lack of fit” with their gender (Heilman, 1983). Bear (2011) showed that negotiators tend to avoid negotiations that contradict their gender role. Bear and Babcock (2012) demonstrated that they could eliminate the male performance advantage in a competitive bargaining simulation by changing the topic of the negotiation from the sale of motorcycle parts (masculine stereotyped) to beads (feminine stereotyped). Male negotiators bested their female counterparts when negotiating the sale of motorcycle parts, but there were no gender differences in performance when beads were at stake. Miles and Lasalle (2008) similarly found that men’s and women’s perceived self-efficacy in negotiation was more positively predictive of their outcomes when they were negotiating over gender-congruent topics (i.e., hiring a babysitter for women vs. hiring an alligator wrestler for men).

**Power dynamics.** Gender stereotypes are intimately related to men’s and women’s power and status in society (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Ridgeway, 2011). The feminine stereotype corresponds with the expectations of low-power behavior (e.g., other-oriented, agreeable, deferential), whereas the masculine stereotype corresponds with expectations for high-power behavior (Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996). Lower-status actors are expected to be concerned about others because doing so makes them seem more useful and less threatening to the social order (Jackman, 1994; Ridgeway, 1982).

Situational dynamics that increase women’s power relative to men in negotiation are likely to decrease gender-stereotypic effects favoring men (for theoretical discussions, see Karakowsky & Miller, 2006; Miles & Clenney, 2010). For example, research on gender and the propensity to initiate negotiations found that the psychological experience of high (vs. low) power made women feel less intimidated (Small, et al., 2007) and more inclined to step up and



negotiate (Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007). Men's propensity to negotiate was not responsive to power manipulations, perhaps because they experience chronically higher power than women in negotiation situations (Magee, et al., 2007; Small, et al., 2007).

**Social cues.** People commonly discern others' gender by their physical appearance, the timbre of their voice, and other social cues, such as a gender-stereotypical name. The more social cues a situation provides (e.g., face-to-face meetings have more than the telephone, which has more than written communication), the more potential there is for a speaker's gender to become an interpretative or evaluative frame in communication (Chaiken & Eagly, 1983). As discussed already, meta-analytic research on gender in negotiation indicates that stereotypic effects on behavior and performance are more likely to arise when there is more communication potential between parties (Stuhlmacher, Citera, & Willis, 2007; Walters, et al., 1998).

Stuhlmacher and colleagues (2007) found that female negotiators were significantly less aggressive in face-to-face than in virtual (e.g., email) negotiations. This could be because face-to-face interactions heighten gender-stereotypic expectations that women even more than men will be concerned about departing the negotiation with a good relationship (Gelfand, Majoy, Raver, Nishii, & O'Brien, 2006). It could also be because women experience a heightened self-consciousness about the policing of prescriptive stereotypes, as described earlier, in face-to-face than in more socially distant contexts.

### **Ambiguity and Gender Triggers in Interaction**

Ambiguity and gender triggers work in interaction, such that gender triggers are more influential with more ambiguity. Bowles et al. (2005) demonstrated the interactive effects of ambiguity and gender triggers by manipulating structural ambiguity and role congruence (i.e., negotiating for self vs. other in a compensation negotiation). Under higher ambiguity, advocacy

role had a significantly greater effect on women than men. Women negotiated significantly better outcomes when advocating for others than for themselves; there was no advocacy effect for men. Under low ambiguity, advocacy role had no effect for men or women, apparently because women were less concerned about role incongruence when they had clear negotiating instructions. The flow of the propositions in Table 1 illustrates further the potentially interactive effects of gender triggers and ambiguity on negotiation behavior.

### **Practical Implications and Future Research Directions**

Taking inspiration from developments in social-psychological research on gender in social behavior, the negotiation field has made enormous strides in understanding the role of gender in negotiation behavior and outcomes. An important practical implication of this progress has been the insights gained into how negotiation processes function as micro-mechanisms of gender inequality in organizations (for a review, see Bowles & McGinn, 2008b). Recognizing that negotiation is an instrumental social process in the construction and reinforcement of gender inequality, negotiation scholars have become increasingly concerned with generating strategies to close gender gaps in negotiated outcomes. This prescriptive vein of research remains in its infancy, but a number of clear propositions have emerged.

#### **Strategies for Women**

**Reduce ambiguity.** One clear implication of the research on ambiguity is that women are likely to benefit from the establishment of clear standards for agreement and norms of acceptable behavior. However, Bowles and McGinn (2008a) caution about gender bias in the information search itself, particularly in contexts with a pattern of differential outcomes for men and women (e.g., compensation). There is a general tendency for women to compare themselves to other women and for men to compare themselves to other men (Crosby, 1984; Major & Forcey, 1985;

Shah, 1998). This tendency is reinforced by the gendered structure of social networks, in which women tend to be more closely connected with women than men, and vice versa (Ibarra, 1993). Therefore, in negotiation contexts with a pattern of outcomes favoring men over women, reducing ambiguity in itself (e.g., establishing standards for agreement) will not be beneficial to women relative to men unless women collect information representative of men's as well as women's experiences. Performance differences are likely to be reduced when men and women negotiate from comparable standards, but not if they draw from gendered points of reference.

**Raise awareness about stereotypes.** Research suggests that simply educating women about stereotypes can help them combat some of stereotypes' pernicious effects. Johns, Schmader, and Martens (2005) tested the effectiveness of educating women about stereotype threat in a math-performance study. The stereotype that men are better at math than women is widely held and easily activated. Researchers presented men and women with difficult math problems and manipulated whether they perceived they were being evaluated. As described earlier, stereotype-threat effects tend to emerge when stereotypes are implicitly activated and participants feel they are being evaluated. In a third condition, the researchers added an explanation of the detrimental effects of stereotype threat on women's math performance. The first two conditions produced the traditional pattern of stereotype threat, in which women perform less well than men when they believe they are being evaluated. Yet, in the third condition, the evaluation manipulation had no effect on women's math performance relative to men's because the women were warned about stereotype threat.

Taking inspiration from John and colleagues (2005), Kray (2007) proposed that one strategy for female negotiators to resist fulfilling negative gender stereotypes is to raise their awareness of the potential for stereotype threat. Drawing on her own research on stereotype

regeneration (Kray, et al., 2002), Kray (2007) also suggested that women might combat negative gender stereotypes in negotiation by contemplating stereotypic advantages of their gender (e.g., good listening and verbal skills) or by tapping other positively stereotyped identities (e.g., MBA or other professional identities; see also Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999).

**Use knowledge about stereotypes.** Female negotiators could also use their knowledge of prescriptive gender stereotypes to craft strategies that enhance their persuasiveness and avoid the risks of social backlash (see Kulik & Olekalns, in press; Tinsley, Cheldelin, Schneider, & Amanatullah, 2009). Women benefit even more than men from adjusting their negotiating style to the social situation. For instance, Flynn and Ames (2006) found that increased propensity for self-monitoring (i.e., attending and adapting to one's social environment, Snyder, 1974) produced significant performance advantages for female but not for male negotiators. In the Bowles and Flynn (2010) persistence studies described earlier, it was primarily the higher-performing female negotiators who adjusted their style of persistence to the gender of their negotiating counterpart.

Searching for answers to women's compensation negotiation dilemma, Bowles and Babcock (in press) tested the differential effects of varied negotiation scripts on men's and women's social outcomes (i.e., evaluators' willingness to work with them after negotiating) and negotiation outcomes (i.e., evaluators' willingness to grant their requests). Varying the negotiation scripts had no effects on men's social or negotiation outcomes, but it did affect women's. They found that conforming to gender stereotypes—for instance, by emphasizing the importance of their organizational relationships—improved women's social outcomes, but it did not enhance evaluators' willingness to grant their requests. Drawing on the literature and advice from negotiation faculty, practitioners, and executive coaches, they devised an alternative

strategy for improving women's social and negotiation outcomes, called "relational accounts."

Relational accounts are explanations for why negotiation requests are legitimate that also demonstrate concern for organizational relationships (Bowles & Babcock, in press). One example is for a woman to present her propensity to negotiate as an asset she brings to her work. This makes her propensity to negotiate seem more legitimate and enables her to present herself as a team player. Bowles and Babcock emphasize that the principles underlying relational accounts—demonstrating the legitimacy of the request and concern for organizational relationships—are more important than the specific language they tested. In other words, women should devise relational accounts that are authentic and fit their negotiation situation.

**Open research questions.** One important unanswered question is the extent to which research and prescriptive advice on gender in negotiation apply to all groups of women. The overwhelming majority of participants and targets of evaluation in research on gender in negotiation have been White college-educated Americans. It remains an open question how women's multiple identities play out in negotiation and whether other status-linked social identities might moderate established effects (Kolb, in press). For instance, there is emerging evidence that gender-based social backlash effects documented with White targets of evaluation are reversed when the targets are Black, suggesting that Black women have more freedom than White women or Black men to assert their dominance in work situations (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). There is also strong evidence that maternal status alters women's compensation and career potential (Budig & England, 2001; Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007), yet there is little empirical research on how maternal status affects women's career-related negotiations (Bowles & McGinn, 2008b; Kolb, in press). Researchers on gender in negotiation should stretch the field's theoretical boundaries by examining how intersecting social identities

influence established gender effects.

### **Strategies for Organizations**

Negotiation scholars recognize that the onus for correcting the distortionary effects of gender stereotypes in negotiation should not be placed solely on women, yet little scholarly attention has been paid to strategies for organizations (Kolb, 2009, *in press*). Indeed, because psychological research methods (e.g., laboratory studies, survey experiments) predominate in negotiation, most research on gender in negotiation is virtually freestanding of organizational context. There are, however, some important implications of existing research for organizations, as well as wide-open opportunities for researchers to investigate organizational characteristics as facilitator or mitigators of gender effects in negotiation (Bowles & McGinn, 2008b).

**Reduce ambiguity.** One strategy for organizations that flows from existing research on gender in negotiation is to reduce ambiguity by making more transparent what career opportunities, resources, or rewards are negotiable and what the standards are for attaining them (see also Fuegen & Biernat, this volume). Borrowing from Rousseau's (2005) work on "i-deals" (i.e., idiosyncratic employment arrangements), Kulik and Olekalns (*in press*) have suggested that organizations create "zones of negotiability" that specify what terms of employment are open to discussion and reformulation (e.g., schedule, training, etc.). Providing greater transparency about what is negotiable and about organizational standards for agreement is likely to reduce the influence of gender stereotypes on negotiation outcomes. Helping women identify as well as men can what opportunities are available could reduce the gender biases in prenegotiation information flows that stem from gendered social networks (Belliveau, 2005; Ibarra, 1993). A diagnostic question for organizational leaders is how do employees learn what is negotiable—through transparent systems or informal relationships?

**Raise awareness of and address gender stereotypes.** Organizations have a role to play in educating employees about implicit gender stereotypes, to help arm them against phenomena, such as stereotype threat, and to raise evaluators' self-awareness of their influences (Kray & Shirako, 2011). In the United States, gender stereotypes are more likely to be embedded in taken-for-granted work practices and behavioral patterns than manifest in explicit forms of gender discrimination (Kolb, 2009; Sturm, 2001). Diagnostic questions for organizational leaders include: To what extent might employees' career-related negotiations be influenced by the historically gendered distribution of resources, opportunities, and rewards within the organization? Do men and women feel equally at liberty to self-advocate without backlash in career-related negotiations? Can employees negotiate to find creative solutions to work-family conflicts without fear of undermining their perceived value within the organization?

**Open research questions.** There is a real need to better understand how organizational culture and context moderate gender effects in negotiation. For instance, while a number of careful studies indicate that women are less inclined than men to negotiate for career rewards, such as compensation (Babcock, Gelfand, Small, & Stayn, 2006; Greig, 2008; Small, et al., 2007), the results of other survey studies suggest that such effects are more pronounced in some organizational contexts than others (e.g., Crothers et al., 2010; Gerhart & Rynes, 1991; O'Shea & Bush, 2002; Schneider, Tinsley, Cheldelin, & Amanatullah, 2010). Yet, we have little insight into what systematic contextual factors, other than ambiguity, might account for this variation.

Psychological research suggests a number of factors that might help to explain variation in male and female negotiators' experiences across organizational contexts. For instance, more gender-stereotyped occupations or organizational contexts could heighten the potential for role incongruence. Rudman and Glick (1999) found that greater backlash toward self-promoting

women in more feminized occupations. Heilman (1980) found that decreasing the proportion of women in an applicant pool produced more negative evaluations of female candidates. Similarly, Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) found that female leaders were evaluated more negatively when they stepped into historically male-dominated leadership roles. Psychological research enlightening gender triggers embedded in organizational structures, cultures, and practices would make important practical and theoretical contributions to the negotiation field.

### **Conclusions**

Psychological research on gender in negotiation has progressed dramatically in the past 25 years, from the application of ill-fitting personality theories to a deeper understanding of the effects of gender stereotypes in context. Perhaps the greatest contribution thus far has been the illumination of negotiation as a micro-mechanism of gender inequality in organizations, widening the gender gaps in pay and authority. Yet, following in the best traditions of negotiation research, we should not stop at the point of explaining how gender stereotypes hinder negotiation performance. Rather, we should continue on the next step of devising research-based prescriptive suggestions for untying the knotty problems we have uncovered.



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Table 1. Summary of Propositions: When Are Gender Stereotypes Likely to Influence Negotiations?

**When are gender stereotypes more influential?**

<b>Influences of gender stereotypes:</b>	<b><i>Gender Triggers</i></b>	<b><i>Ambiguity</i></b>
<p><b><i>Use as Strategic Information</i></b></p> <p><i>Proposition 1:</i> Negotiators are more likely to use gender stereotypes to make inferences about their counterparts' (or constituents') "types" (e.g., competitive vs. cooperative)...</p>	<p>(a) ...when gender stereotypes are implicitly activated.</p> <p>(b) ...when negotiating roles align with or contradict gender roles.</p> <p>(c) ...when power dynamics reinforce gender stereotypes.</p> <p>(d) ...when there are more social cues of counterparts' (or constituents') gender.</p>	<p>(e) ...the less familiar they are with counterparts' (or constituents') negotiating style, competences, or preferences (i.e., increased type ambiguity).</p> <p>(f) ...the less clarity they have about the zone of possible agreement and standards for agreement (i.e., increased structural ambiguity).</p> <p>(g) ...the less clarity they have about how they should behave (i.e., increased norm ambiguity).</p>
<p><b><i>Stereotype Fulfillment</i></b></p> <p><i>Proposition 2:</i> Negotiators are more likely to fulfill gender stereotypes, ...</p>	<p>(a) ...when gender stereotypes are implicitly activated and negotiators feel they are being evaluated.</p> <p>(b) ...when negotiating roles align with gender roles.</p> <p>(c) ...when power dynamics reinforce gender stereotypes.</p> <p>(d) ...when there are more social cues of the parties' gender.</p>	<p>(e) ...the less familiar parties are with one another's negotiating style, competences, or preferences (i.e., increased type ambiguity).</p> <p>(f) ...the less clarity they have about the zone of possible agreement and standards for agreement (i.e., increased structural ambiguity).</p> <p>(g) ...the less clarity they have about how they should behave in the negotiation (i.e., increased norm ambiguity).</p>

<p><b><i>Stereotype Reactance</i></b>  <i>Proposition 1:</i> Negotiators are more likely to resist gender stereotypes by self-presenting in counter-stereotypic ways...</p>	<p>(a) ...when negotiators are confronted with explicit gender stereotypes.  (b) ...when negotiators have a strong impression motivation to contradict the stereotype.  (c) ...when there are more social cues of the parties' gender.</p>	<p>(d) ...the less clarity they have about how they should behave in the negotiation (i.e., increased norm ambiguity).</p>
<p><b><i>Stereotype Policing and Conformity</i></b>  <i>Proposition 2:</i> Negotiators are more likely to police and conform to gender stereotypes...</p>	<p>(a) ...when gender stereotypes are implicitly activated in the negotiation context.  (b) ...when negotiating roles conflict with gender roles.  (c) ...when power dynamics reinforce gender stereotypes.  (d) ...when there are more social cues of the parties' gender.</p>	<p>(e) ...the less clarity they have about how targets of evaluation should behave in the negotiation (i.e., increased norm ambiguity).</p>