

When Gender Matters in Organizational Negotiations

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Keywords

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Abstract

A person's gender is not a reliable predictor of their negotiation behavior or outcomes, because the degree and character of gender dynamics in negotiation vary across situations. Systematic effects of gender on negotiation are best predicted by situational characteristics that cue gendered behavior or increase reliance on gendered standards for agreement. In this review, we illuminate two levers that heighten or constrain the potential for gender effects in organizational negotiations: (a) the salience and relevance of gender within the negotiating context and (b) the degree of ambiguity (i.e., lack of objective standards or information) with regard to what is negotiable, how to negotiate, or who the parties are as negotiators. In our summary, we review practical implications of this research for organizational leaders and individuals who are motivated to reduce gender-based inequities in negotiation outcomes. In conclusion, we suggest future directions for research on gender in organizational negotiations.

WHEN GENDER MATTERS IN ORGANIZATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiation is endemic to work life—fundamental to the allocation of resources, the assignment of decision rights, and the management of conflict. It is also, therefore, a critical process in the creation and mitigation of inequality in organizations (Bowles & McGinn 2008, Sturm 2009). Whereas the term negotiation commonly evokes images of formally clad competitive bargainers, thought leaders within the negotiation field have long embraced a more inclusive perspective on negotiations as interactive problem-solving processes that require some concessions, trade-offs, or conflict to be resolved (Lax & Sebenius 1986, Thompson 2005). This definition includes explicit negotiations, such as over the terms of a deal, the price of a product or service, or the details of a job offer. It also includes the everyday pursuit of mutually beneficial solutions that integrate the conflicting, compatible, and complementary interests of colleagues, clients, and other important stakeholders.

In the past half century, scholarly understanding of the role of gender in negotiation has transformed the study of gender as personality to the study of gender as a factor in the social construction of negotiation situations. In the early days, scholars imagined that gender would predict bargaining behavior in stereotypical ways (e.g., “men are competitive” and “women are cooperative”), but those expectations broke down as evidence of conflicting findings accumulated (e.g., see reviews by Kray & Thompson 2004, Rubin & Brown 1975, Walters et al. 1998). As life experience shows us, sometimes women are more competitive than men and men more cooperative than women. To the extent that there are systematic gender effects in negotiation, they are more clearly a function of gendered negotiating contexts than of parties’ gender (e.g., see recent meta-analytic reviews by Kugler et al. 2018, Mazei et al. 2015). Our review of research on when gender matters in organizational negotiations started with the historical development of past literature reviews on gender in negotiation and continued with a comprehensive search of the most recent studies published in psychology and organizational behavior between 2007 and 2021 (see the **Supplemental Appendix** for details).

One key takeaway to draw from this review is that, although there are real gender effects in negotiation (e.g., replicable differences in how men and women behave, perform, and are evaluated), there is no empirical foundation for global claims about “what men do, and women don’t” (or vice versa).¹ To illustrate the importance of context in interpreting and predicting gender effects in negotiation, we draw inspiration from a comic strip in the satirical *Dilbert* cartoon series by Scott Adams (see **Figure 1**). Starring characters in the series are Dilbert, a technically minded and socially awkward engineer, and his awful Pointy-haired Boss. In this strip, a minor character known as Tina The Technical Writer attempts to negotiate with the Pointy-haired Boss for access to a second computer monitor:

Tina: Why does Dilbert get two computer monitors while I only get one?!

Boss: Well, according to researchers, it’s because men tend to negotiate and women don’t.

Tina: So, what happens now?

*Boss: If I had to guess, I’d say more complaining. (see **Figure 1**)*

¹We use the term gender as opposed to sex because research on gender in negotiation is overwhelmingly based on self-reports or social interpretations of who is a man and who is a woman as opposed to biological information (Deaux & LaFrance 1998). Reflective of the current state of the research on gender in negotiation, our review is limited to documented gender effects associated with people in the gross categories male/female or men/women. We highlight that the differential experiences of people with fluid, nonbinary, or transgender identities comprise an understudied and important direction for future research and theory development (see also Clair et al. 2019).



DILBERT © 2007 Scott Adams, Inc. Used By permission of ANDREWS MCMEEL SYNDICATION. All rights reserved.

Figure 1

This comic strip illustrates how gender effects in negotiation arise out of situational factors (e.g., greater resistance to women's than men's self-advocacy) yet are misattributed to personality differences between men and women (e.g., "men tend to negotiate and women don't"). Figure reproduced from *Dilbert*; copyright 2007 Scott Adams, Inc., with permission from Andrews McMeel Syndication. All rights reserved.

Satirical humor functions by revealing moral violations that uncomprehending audiences miss (Veatch 1998). In this satire of an organizational negotiation, Adams appears to target at least two uncomprehending audiences. The first includes managers who fail to recognize the injustice in labeling men's self-advocacy as negotiation and women's as complaining. The other audience comprises the researchers cited by the boss, who fail to appreciate how the phenomena they intend to illuminate could be reinforced by the reporting of their findings.

To help scholars and managers interpret, predict, and mitigate gender biases in organizational negotiations, we review the existing research and offer a basic framework for understanding when gender matters in organizational negotiations. As **Figure 2** shows, our framework consists of two general categories of contextual factors that together moderate the likelihood of gender effects in organizational negotiations: (a) the salience and relevance of gender within the negotiating context and (b) the degree of ambiguity (i.e., lack of objective norms or standards) for potential or actual negotiators with regard to what is negotiable, how to negotiate, or who the negotiators are (building on Bowles et al. 2005, Bowles 2013 and recent meta-analyses by Mazei et al. 2015, Kugler et al. 2018). As depicted in the figure, the likelihood of gender effects in organizational negotiations increases when gender is more salient and relevant, and when there is more ambiguity shrouding the negotiation context. The intensity dials—red for the salience and relevance of gender and blue for ambiguity—are inspired by foundational laboratory studies and other experimental research, which have demonstrated how gender influences negotiation by manipulating characteristics of the negotiation context.

We review the theory and evidence undergirding this framework. Drawing on laboratory and field-based research, we discuss how characteristics of organizational contexts tend to dial up or down the influence of gender on negotiation. In conclusion, we offer practical suggestions for organizations and individuals to mitigate gender biases in negotiation and spotlight directions for future research.

SALIENCE AND RELEVANCE OF GENDER IN CONTEXT

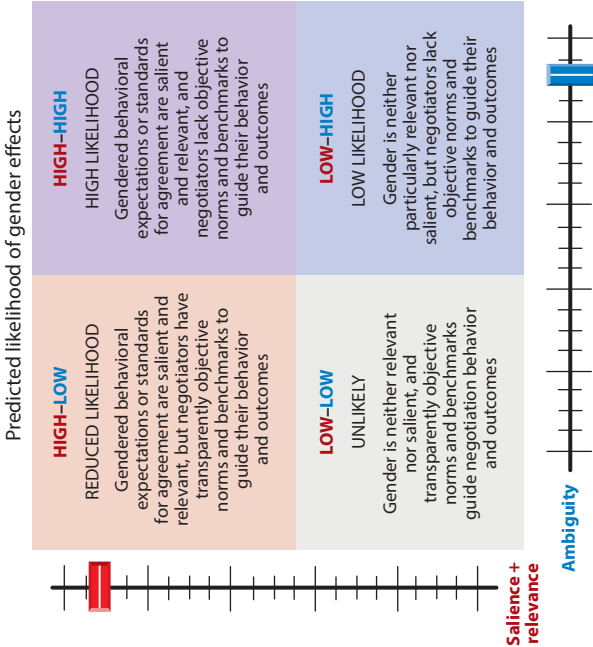
The salience and relevance of gender to any particular organizational negotiation can be analyzed at four levels: (a) the social-cultural context in which the organization is embedded, (b) negotiators' intersecting social identities, (c) the organization's demography and culture, and (d) the subject being negotiated. We employ the *Dilbert* comic strip in **Figure 1** to illustrate these levels of analysis depicted in **Figure 2**.

Salience and relevance of gender in context

- **Social-cultural context** informs gender stereotypes in negotiation
- **Intersecting social identities** of negotiators moderate the salience and significance of gender
- **Organizational culture and demography** influence the strength and substance of gendered norms and standards
- **Subject of negotiation** moderates the perceived relevance of gender

Example: Factors that create disadvantages for female as compared to male negotiators

- **Cultural stereotypes** suggest men are better negotiators than women
- **Intersecting social identities** (e.g., race, class, occupational rank) grant men greater status or power than women
- **Organizational demography and culture** reinforce cultural stereotypes favoring men as negotiators or contribute to men's relative status or power as compared to women (e.g., male-dominated, masculine-stereotypic work environment)
- **Subject of negotiation** is masculine-stereotypic (e.g., pay, automotive industry)



Sources of ambiguity

- **What is negotiable?** Lack of objective clarity about zone of possible agreement and appropriate standards for agreement increases potential for gender to bias expectations or information search
- **How to negotiate?** Lack of clarity about whether it's appropriate to negotiate and, if so, how it is more inhibiting for parties at higher risk of social backlash for negotiation attempts (e.g., women vs. men from dominant groups)
- **Who are the parties?** Lack of clear and specific information about parties' interests, competencies, or alternatives to agreement increases potential for reliance on stereotypes

(Caption appears on following page)

Figure 2 (*Figure appears on preceding page*)

A framework for understanding when gender matters in organizational negotiations. This figure displays the two general categories of contextual factors that together affect the likelihood that gender effects will emerge in organizational negotiations: (a) the salience and relevance of gender within the negotiating context, and (b) the degree of ambiguity (i.e., lack of objective norms or standards) regarding what is negotiable, how to negotiate, or who the negotiators are. The likelihood of gender effects increases when gender is more salient and relevant and there is greater ambiguity in the negotiation context.

Social-Cultural Context

Tina The Technical Writer is negotiating with her boss in an American cultural context where it is normative for men (as compared to women) to be relatively self-oriented (individualistic) and for women (as compared to men) to be other-oriented (communal or collectivistic) (Cuddy et al. 2015). Most of the research on gender in negotiation—including the findings cited by the Pointy-haired Boss (discussed below)—has been conducted in individualistic cultural contexts, specifically the United States. US scholars were the first to document the propensity to stereotype men as assertive and competitive bargainers and women as agreeable and cooperative counterparts, in accordance with North American cultural norms (Kray et al. 2001).

More recently, international teams of scholars have shown that “the commonly endorsed ‘individualistic-man’ and ‘collectivistic-woman’ stereotypes are not universal, but rather are moderated by cultural values” (Cuddy et al. 2015, p. 631). In collectivistic cultures, such as China or South Korea, men tend to be perceived as models of communal ideals and women as self-interested and competitive (Cuddy et al. 2015), including as negotiators (Shan et al. 2016, Toosi et al. 2020). Congruently, recent meta-analytic research has shown that the propensity in US studies for men to competitively claim more value in negotiation than women is reversed in collectivistic cultures, such as China or Turkey, where women outperform men (Shan et al. 2019).

These social-cultural norms give shape to gender-stereotypical behavior and performance expectations that parties have for themselves and their counterparts. Descriptive stereotypes reflect beliefs that gender influences what type of negotiator one is (e.g., style, effectiveness) (Kray et al. 2001, 2002). Prescriptive stereotypes define what is perceived as appropriate negotiating behavior, depending on one’s gender (Bowles et al. 2007). Both descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes appear to be at play in the interaction between Tina and her boss. The premise that “men tend to negotiate and women don’t” is a descriptive stereotype. The characterization of Tina’s negotiation attempt as complaining suggests she has violated a prescriptive gender stereotype (i.e., it’s unbecoming for Tina, but apparently not Dilbert, to ask for a second monitor).

Descriptive stereotypes. Evidence suggests that descriptive stereotypes are more likely to lead to stereotype fulfillment when they operate at an implicit (i.e., subtle or nonconscious) level of awareness (Kray et al. 2001, 2002). The Pointy-haired Boss’s assertion that “men tend to negotiate and women don’t” is an explicit stereotype. Although potentially more offensive than an unspoken assumption, explicit stereotypes at least can be directly addressed or resisted. In the United States, studies have shown that telling men and women prior to a negotiation that the men are likely to outperform the women tends to boost the assertiveness of women’s offer behavior and subsequent negotiation performance relative to men’s (Kray et al. 2001).

By contrast, implicit stereotypes tend to linger, absent conscious or intentional reflection, thus posing “a threat in the air” for people who are targets of negative expectations (Steele 1997). In comparison to the above-described effect of explicit stereotypes, the subtle suggestion that negotiators with masculine-stereotypic traits are likely to be the most effective negotiators tends

to produce gender effects in negotiation behavior and performance that favor men (e.g., “rational and assertive, and demonstrate a regard for their own interests”) (Kray et al. 2001, Studies 3 and 4). Implicit stereotype exposure can also be manipulated to produce stereotype fulfillment in ways that favor women, namely by priming the suggestion that feminine-stereotypic traits are essential to effective performance (e.g., verbal skills, good listener, emotionally attuned) (Kray et al. 2002).

Descriptive gender stereotypes also color parties’ views of and approach to negotiation counterparts. For instance, evidence suggests that the stereotype of women as less competent and more agreeable negotiators than men explains why negotiators lie more frequently to female than male counterparts (Kray et al. 2014). Studies suggest that the stereotyping of men as more competitive than women may lead counterparts to be less trusting of their offers (Maoz 2009) and more doubtful of their inability to make concessions (Bowles & Flynn 2010).

Being typed as cooperative or competitive may also shape what one comes to expect from negotiation processes. Classic work by Kelley & Stahelski (1970) illuminated how negotiators who are typed as competitive inhabit a more uniformly competitive world than those typed as cooperative because all of their counterparts are primed to compete with them, whereas cooperative types tend to experience a mix of cooperative and competitive counterparts. This theory may help to explain why women (stereotyped as cooperative) are more prone than men (stereotyped as competitive) to shift their negotiation behavior depending on their counterpart’s gender (Bowles & Flynn 2010). It may also help to explain why men with more stereotypically masculine facial structures (e.g., more square than oval) have been found to be more competitive negotiators (Haselhuhn et al. 2014), although the evidence linking biochemistry (e.g., testosterone) to facial structure and social behavior is too nuanced and complex to support simple predictions (Bird et al. 2016, Mehta et al. 2015). Other US research shows that negotiators draw inferences from their counterparts’ facial structures about how cooperative they will be and act accordingly (Gladstone & O’Connor 2014).

Prescriptive stereotypes. In addition to descriptive expectations about how men and women will act, people hold stereotypical assumptions about how men and women should act. The feminine prescription in individualistic cultures that women put others before themselves helps to explain two documented gender effects in negotiation. The first, as reported by the Pointy-haired Boss, is that “men tend to negotiate and women don’t” (Babcock & Laschever 2003, Small et al. 2007). The leading explanation for why women are less likely than men to self-advocate in negotiation—as Tina The Technical Writer attempts to do—is that it is more socially risky for them to do so than for men (Amanatullah & Morris 2010, Bowles et al. 2007). Consistent with the characterization of Tina as a complainer, numerous studies report a reduced willingness to work with women who negotiate for higher pay as compared to those who let such opportunities pass (e.g., Amanatullah & Tinsley 2013b, Bowles et al. 2007, Duguid & Thomas-Hunt 2015). Moreover, growing evidence suggests that women not only incur a higher social cost than men for self-advocating (i.e., suffer a greater drop in how they are perceived after versus before a negotiation attempt), but also encounter more resistance than men to their negotiation requests (Amanatullah & Tinsley 2013a, Artz et al. 2018). After Tina attempts to negotiate for a second monitor, for example, her boss is unreceptive and predicts the outcome will be “more complaining”—not, “Here’s your monitor. Now, stop complaining.”

A second related effect explained by prescriptive stereotypes is that women tend to negotiate more assertively and effectively on behalf of others than for themselves (Amanatullah & Morris 2010, Bowles et al. 2005, Mazei et al. 2015). Indeed, research suggests that the prescriptive feminine stereotype that women care for others more than themselves leads female negotiators

to be evaluated more negatively both if they do forcefully advocate for themselves and if they do not forcefully advocate for others (Amanatullah & Tinsley 2013b). This set of findings that a woman's negotiation behavior and others' evaluations of that behavior are affected by a simple shift in whether she is advocating for herself or for someone else illuminates why interpreters of research on gender in negotiation should avoid making claims about what men or women do or don't do (Amanatullah & Morris 2010; Amanatullah & Tinsley 2013b; Bowles et al. 2005, 2007; Mazei et al. 2015). To interpret and predict gender effects in negotiation, one must understand how social-cultural norms shape negotiators' expectations and behavior.

Intersecting Social Identities

Gender is the most well-studied identity characteristic in negotiation research, but it does not function alone in influencing how parties evaluate and treat their counterparts (Toosi et al. 2020). In a classic study of intersectional effects of gender and race in US negotiations, Ayres & Siegelman (1995) showed that car dealers offered significantly lower sales prices to White men than to women or Blacks, even though the study's confederate buyers were similarly dressed and used identical bargaining scripts. Simply seeing the buyer was a White man affected the car dealers' offers.

The expectation that women will be more cooperative and yielding than men reflects both cultural norms and women's social status relative to men, as indicated by gender differences in the command of financial resources and authority (Cuddy et al. 2015, Ridgeway et al. 1998). The descriptive stereotype that men will be assertive and in charge and women will be agreeable and supportive of others reflects a societal structure in which men are more often in the lead, with women in support roles (Eagly & Steffen 1984, Koenig et al. 2011). The prescriptive gender stereotype that a woman should be meeker when advocating for herself than others is a social mechanism that holds women back from competing for resources and authority typically commanded by men (Bowles et al. 2007, Rudman & Fairchild 2004).

These status effects are not limited to gender. When men from lower-status groups attempt to self-advocate in negotiation (e.g., for higher pay), they face similar challenges to those documented for women (Al Dabbagh et al. 2016; Hernandez et al. 2019; Toosi et al. 2019, 2020). In one of set of studies, Al Dabbagh et al. (2016) investigated the job negotiation experiences of men from the Arab Gulf by manipulating whether they were candidates for a position with a national or global employer. In the Gulf region, male nationals dominate the domestic employment market but are often negatively stereotyped by global employers—making them relatively high-status candidates (as compared to female nationals) in the domestic employment market and relatively low-status candidates (as compared to Western expatriates) in the global employment market. In national employment contexts, the researchers replicated the findings that women are more hesitant than men to negotiate for higher pay and are evaluated more negatively for doing so. But in a global employment context in which the male nationals are lower-status job candidates, the men were more hesitant to negotiate for higher pay and were evaluated more negatively when they did (Al Dabbagh et al. 2016). Similarly, a set of US studies on salary negotiations showed that participants evaluated the negotiating behavior of Black (as compared to White) male job candidates more negatively and were correspondingly less inclined to make concessions to Black (as compared to White) male candidates (Hernandez et al. 2019). “According to research,” Tina’s role in the failed negotiation attempt might also have been played by Asok, the series’ undervalued gay male character from the Indian Institute of Technology.

It is also nontrivial that Tina, Dilbert, and their Pointy-haired Boss all present as cishet. In our review of the literature on gender in negotiation, we uncovered no published studies that

systematically took into account the experiences of people with LGBTQ+ identities.² This significant absence limits theorizing of the effects of gender on negotiation. For instance, emerging evidence (Hudson & Ghani 2021) suggests that lesbian women are stereotyped as more assertive than either heterosexual women or gay men (for discussion of subgroup stereotypes of gays and lesbians, see Brambilla et al. 2011, Clausell & Fiske 2005). The global stereotype of lesbians as masculine might make it more socially expected and accepted for them to negotiate more competitively than straight women, but their lower social status relative to straight men—particularly men from the dominant group (e.g., White American)—might still suppress their potential for agentic self-advocacy for status-linked resources, such as pay and authority (as it does for straight women) (Kolb & McGinn 2009; see also discussions of the masculine stereotyping of Black as compared to White women, Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach 2008, Rosette et al. 2016, Sturm 2009). Substantial work is needed to advance the study of gender in negotiation beyond the categorical effects of being a male or female negotiator (Clair et al. 2019, Toosi et al. 2020).

It is also noteworthy that the *Dilbert* strip depicts interactions among highly educated workers. The potential to self-advocate for occupational rewards and resources is a privilege of higher professional status (Hall & Krueger 2012, Rousseau et al. 2006), and evidence suggests that resistance to women's negotiation attempts is reduced when women have higher achieved status (Amanatullah & Tinsley 2013a). Tina The Technical Writer's request would likely be perceived differently if she were cast as a senior executive. Meta-analytic findings suggest that gender effects favoring men in negotiation are more likely when men and women are in roles that reinforce the gender status hierarchy, such as a male manager negotiating with a female job candidate (Stuhlmacher & Walters 1999), or in the case of Tina and her boss.

There are documented gender differences in the compensation agreements reached by top executives, but they are less likely with greater visibility (see the section below on ambiguity about what is negotiable) (Blevins et al. 2019), and the differences do not uniformly disadvantage women (Groysberg et al. 2020, Klein et al. 2021, Leslie et al. 2017). For instance, evidence indicates that "high-potential" executive women have the capacity to claim higher compensation than male peers when organizations have strategic diversity goals (Leslie et al. 2017). Research also shows that female CEOs tend to negotiate more generous initial severance agreements than male CEOs, especially when entering a small firm with an all-male board or in a male-dominated industry, or when organizational performance is declining (Klein et al. 2021). This gender gap is likely explained by female (as compared to male) leaders' greater vulnerability to discriminatory dismissal (Klein et al. 2021).

Gender effects can also be confounded with effects of occupational status (Watson 1994). Our focal cartoon provides a practical example: Tina is a technical writer (the majority of whom are women), and Dilbert is an engineer (the majority of whom are men). A denial of Tina's request for additional computer equipment might be justified simply on the basis that investment in the productivity of engineers (as compared to technical writers) is more important to the company's bottom line.

Finally, there are behavioral implications of systematic gender differences in occupational status. Chronic asymmetries in men's and women's psychological experience of power (i.e., a sense of control over people and resources) are likely to affect their relative sense of entitlement to

²LGBTQ+ is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (GLAAD Media 2016) with "+" added to include other people who identify with this community. We use this contemporary terminology recognizing that it is likely to evolve with social understanding of gender and sexual orientation (Clarke 2019).

negotiate (Galinsky et al. 2017, Tost 2015). Gender differences in the propensity to negotiate and make assertive first offers dissipate when both men and women are primed with a high psychological sense of power (Hong & van der Wijk 2013, Galinsky et al. 2003, Small et al. 2007).

Powerful behavior may also be received differently depending on a negotiator's gender. For instance, the expression of anger is more strongly associated with dominance and masculinity than with subordination or femininity. Brescoll & Uhlmann (2008) showed experimentally that expressing anger (versus sadness) at work enhanced men's perceived status but reduced women's. Male (as compared to female) negotiators might reap more benefits from a flash of anger, especially in a male-dominated work context (Trombini et al. 2020). Having a strong alternative to agreement is a classic source of power in negotiation, yet one that appears to induce more backlash against female than male negotiators (Bowles & Babcock 2013, Dannals et al. 2021). An archival analysis of hundreds of negotiation simulations conducted by early-career and executive professionals revealed that women (as compared to men) with strong alternatives to agreement had significantly more trouble reaching agreements, even though their goals and starting offers were statistically indistinguishable (Dannals et al. 2021).

In this section, we further tighten the caution tape around popular generalizations about “men” and “women” in negotiation by illuminating the importance of considering gender in the context of other salient and relevant social identities. Intersectional analyses of gender in negotiation clarify that it is less informative to ask “What is the gender of the negotiator?” than to ask “What is the significance—salience and relevance—of gender within the negotiating context?” Within organizational contexts, it is important to consider how status hierarchies and power dynamics give rise to or dampen potential gender effects.

Organizational Culture and Demography

Analysis of how gender influences organizational negotiations should account for the culture and demography of work environments (Kolb & McGinn 2009). Organizations and occupations vary in the degree to which they are characterized by gender-stereotypic norms or numerically dominated by people of particular genders (Acker 1990, Reskin 1993). The 2007 *Dilbert* comic, for example, is situated in a corporate engineering division, a heavily male-dominated sector of the US economy. Embedded in a work environment that prizes masculine-stereotypical technical prowess, Tina The Technical Writer is a woman occupying a relatively feminine-stereotypic (e.g., verbal versus analytical) staff role.

In masculine-stereotypic and male-dominated work environments, men tend to have better access than women to information, resources, and decision-making authority in ways that create negotiation advantages (Kolb & McGinn 2009, Sturm 2009). For instance, Roth's (2009) study of women on Wall Street revealed how social marginalization and gender-biased evaluations of one's role and work contributions make self-advocacy more challenging for women than men. As discussed below in the sections on ambiguity, social marginalization in a male-dominated environment takes women out of the flow of knowledge sharing and advice on what is negotiable and how best to negotiate.

As discussed above, systematic gender differences in the command of authority (Tost 2015) or other forms of control over people or resources (Galinsky et al. 2017) may produce chronic gender differences in the psychological sense of power to negotiate (Galinsky et al. 2003, Small et al. 2007). Masculine-stereotyped negotiation contexts also tend to activate implicit expectations that men will be more assertive and effective negotiators than women (Bear & Babcock 2012, Reif et al. 2019). Environments that heighten perceptions of negotiation as masculine stereotyped can also increase pressure on men to demonstrate their bargaining prowess (Mazei et al. 2021). Evidence

suggests that men's ethical standards in negotiation are particularly vulnerable to decline when negotiation performance is perceived as a demonstration of manliness (Kray & Haselhuhn 2012, Lee et al. 2017, Mazei et al. 2021). In general, sharpening the perception that a negotiation is a competitive game makes negotiators more prone to withhold information or lie, and men are more susceptible than women to construe negotiations in that way (Kennedy et al. 2017, Pierce & Thompson 2018).

How negotiation behavior might be influenced by feminine-stereotyped and female-dominated work environments is less well understood. A work environment that values stereotypically feminine strengths (e.g., communication, relationships) might positively reinforce women's negotiation performance relative to men's (Kray et al. 2002). However, all-female negotiating contexts could activate feminine-stereotypic norms that impede negotiation effectiveness. For instance, evidence suggests that women negotiating with women tend to be more conflict avoidant (as compared to male or mixed-gender dyads) and, as a result, persist less in the face of resistance (Bowles & Flynn 2010) and compromise too quickly (e.g., "split the difference" rather than make value-creating trades) (Curhan et al. 2008, Miles & LaSalle 2009). Many feminine-stereotypic and female-dominated work environments are characterized by responsibilities to care or advocate for others (e.g., aides, nurses, public defenders, social workers). Some research has shown that female negotiators are more willing to stretch the truth to gain advantage when advocating for others as opposed to themselves (Kouchaki & Kray 2018).

In sum, an organization's culture and demography can influence the strength and substance of gendered behavioral norms and expectations. As discussed above, cultures vary in the meaning they associate with particular gender identities, and the significance of gender may be moderated by the salience and relevance of other social identities in the work context. The gender distribution of workers in an organization also has practical and psychological implications for what and how men and women negotiate.

Subject of Negotiation

A final important contextual consideration is what the negotiation is about—and, more specifically, the degree to which the subject of the negotiation is gendered. Meta-analytic evidence shows that when the subject of negotiation is less gender-role congruent for women, gender differences favoring men in negotiation are greater, in terms of both the propensity to negotiate (Kugler et al. 2018) and negotiation performance (Mazei et al. 2015). For example, in a laboratory study, Bear & Babcock (2012) manipulated whether parties were negotiating the purchase of either motorcycle headlamps or lamp beads for jewelry and kept all other negotiation terms the same (prices, quantities, etc.). The automobile industry is stereotypically masculine and male dominated, whereas jewelry crafts and sales are more gender balanced. When assigned to negotiate motorcycle parts, men obtained significantly better deals than did women, but there was no significant gender difference in negotiations over jewelry beads (Bear & Babcock 2012).

Self-advocating for higher pay poses a distinct challenge for women (Bear 2011) because it requires making claim to a resource that is both status-enhancing (Ridgeway et al. 1998) and masculine stereotyped, due to the culturally dominant (even if, in many countries, economically inaccurate) male-breadwinner model (Pfau-Effinger 2004). A review of 44 studies testing for gender effects in self-advocacy in career negotiations revealed that 91% focused exclusively on negotiating compensation or job-offer terms, and all of the studies reporting a male advantage related to bargaining over pay (Bowles et al. 2019). The one study that reported women negotiating more often than men included a broader range of issues (research funds, dual-career accommodations, etc.) (Mitchell & Hesli 2013).

The previously described research on men and women in the Arab Gulf negotiating job offers from national and global employers illustrates the dual challenge women face in negotiating for a resource that is both status linked and masculine stereotyped. As described above, Al Dabbagh et al. (2016) found that evaluators were disinclined to work with female nationals who negotiated (versus not) in both the local and global employment contexts and with male nationals who negotiated (versus not) in the global (but not the local) employment context. These disinclinations were explained by evaluators' perceptions that the negotiators had failed to demonstrate sufficient concern for organizational relationships—although male nationals negotiating in the local job market were not held to that standard. As discussed above, the normative expectation that members of lower-status groups should be more attentive (than members of higher-status groups) to the concerns of others is a social mechanism for reinforcing the hierarchy between groups (Fiske et al. 2002, Rudman & Fairchild 2004).

In contrast to their male peers, Al Dabbagh et al. (2016) found that female negotiators were also perceived as less desirable colleagues because asking for higher pay (versus not) made them appear immodest and materialistic. Modesty is a primary prescriptive feminine stereotype for Arab women, particularly in gender-mixed work environments. The materialist critique was predicted because of the predominance of the male-breadwinner model in the Gulf region, which leads women's earnings to be associated solely with personal consumption. In sum, female negotiators were penalized for negotiating for higher pay both because it was a status violation and because it defied prescriptive gender norms.

When the Pointy-haired Boss asserts, "According to researchers, men tend to negotiate and women don't," he isn't wrong (e.g., Babcock & Laschever 2003). But a closer look at the evidence suggests this effect is most likely to occur within the realm of self-advocacy related to pay or in other clearly masculine-stereotyped domains (Kugler et al. 2018). Organizational studies of career self-advocacy related to one's role or workload suggest women negotiate as or more often than men (Bowles et al. 2019, Rousseau et al. 2006). Indeed, workload negotiations that are related to resolving work-family conflicts are heavily feminine stereotyped (Kelly et al. 2010, Bowles et al. 2021). Growing evidence suggests that men tend to avoid or hold back from negotiating access to family-friendly work practices (e.g., parental leave, flexible work arrangements) to avoid "not man enough" backlash for deviating from their prescribed gender role (Berdahl & Moon 2013, Rudman & Mescher 2013). If negotiation researchers had first tested for gender effects in negotiations over flexible work schedules, they might have concluded that "women tend to negotiate, and men don't" (Bear 2011, Bowles et al. 2019).

Salience and Relevance of Gender in Context: Key Takeaways

In sum, negotiator gender alone is a poor predictor of gender dynamics in negotiation. It is more useful to consider how situational factors might give rise to or shape potential gender effects. The social-cultural context is a worthwhile starting point because it informs the content of gendered norms. As described above, gender-stereotypic expectations that men will be more assertive and competitive negotiators than women are more likely in individualistic than collectivistic cultural contexts (Cuddy et al. 2015, Toosi et al. 2020).

Within the cultural context, other intersecting status-linked social identities could influence negotiations. When the analytical lens encompasses other types of intergroup social hierarchies, it becomes apparent that normative expectations that women be cooperative, agreeable, and other-oriented are not gender specific but common to normative expectations for members of lower-status social groups (Fiske et al. 2002, Ridgeway et al. 1998, Rudman & Fairchild 2004). Most research on gender in negotiation is drawn from predominately White, socially and

economically privileged, and heteronormative populations—a common limitation in behavioral research (Heinrich et al. 2010). Studies that compare the negotiation experiences of men from higher- versus lower-status groups suggest that the male advantage in negotiation (Bowles & Kray 2015) is actually a story about privileged male advantage in negotiation. Evidence suggests that men from lower-status groups actually face challenges common to those associated with women in negotiation (Al Dabbagh et al. 2016, Ayres & Siegelman 1995, Hernandez et al. 2019, Toosi et al. 2020).

Organizational culture and demography may heighten the salience and perceived relevance of employees' gender identities (Heilman 2012, Kolb & McGinn 2009). For instance, when women are sparsely represented within an occupational role, their gender is likely to be more salient than when they are well represented (Ely 1995, King et al. 2010). When men dominate the top rungs of the organizational hierarchy and women are overrepresented at lower levels, the effects of gender and power may be exacerbated or confounded (Galinsky et al. 2017, Watson 1994).

Finally, the subject of negotiation matters, particularly the extent to which the substance of negotiation is stereotypically masculine or feminine, or involves claiming status-linked resources (e.g., pay). As **Figure 2** summarizes, gender effects favoring men in negotiation are most likely in social-cultural contexts in which (a) men are stereotyped as more effective negotiators than women, (b) men have a privileged social status, (c) the organizational culture and demography reinforce men's privileged status relative to women, and (d) the subject of negotiation is masculine stereotyped.

AMBIGUITY ABOUT WHAT, HOW, AND WHO

As **Figure 2** illustrates, to predict when gender matters in organizational negotiations, it is important to take into account not only the contextual factors that heighten the salience and relevance of gender but also the degree of ambiguity for individual parties. In negotiation, ambiguity is created by a lack of clarity about what is negotiable, how to negotiate, and who the parties are as negotiators (e.g., what are their interests, alternatives to agreement, or negotiating styles). Gender effects are most likely to arise in situations with a high degree of ambiguity about how to enact the negotiation and when gendered behavioral norms or standards are salient and relevant within the negotiating context (Bowles et al. 2005, Kray & Gelfand 2009, Mazei et al. 2015).

When social situations are ambiguous, actors have to search the surrounding environment and their own mental schema (e.g., past experiences, internalized norms and heuristics) for cues on how to enact the situation. In such “weak” situations (Mischel 1977), individual differences in personality traits or social status are more likely to guide behavior (e.g., see also Dovidio et al. 1988). In “strong” social situations with clear and impartial norms and standards to guide actors through their parts, individual differences are less likely to be influential (Mischel 1977). Gender biases in negotiation can be reduced by “strengthening” negotiation situations with more objective norms and standards to guide negotiator behavior and assess agreement terms. In other words, the potential for gender effects can be dialed down by reducing ambiguity about what is negotiable, how to negotiate, and who the parties are as negotiators.

What Is Negotiable?

The *Dilbert* comic strip deftly illustrates how ambiguity affects what is negotiable when Tina asks, “Why does Dilbert get two computer monitors while I get only one?!” The experience of not being in the know or flow of resources and opportunities is common in organizational life, particularly for people from historically marginalized groups, such as women and members of racial minorities

(Ibarra 1993, Miller et al. 1981, Srivastava 2015) and those from a lower social class than most coworkers (Ingram & Oh 2020). When clear standards regarding what is negotiable are lacking, parties tend to rely on personal experience or social networks to scope out the “zone of possible agreement” (i.e., areas of common ground preferable to best no-agreement alternatives) (Lax & Sebenius 1986).

Because people tend to connect more readily and deeply with people similar to themselves, dominant group members tend to have better access than members of underrepresented groups (e.g., women in male-dominated workplaces or occupations) to information, resources, and support from their informal social networks (Gompers et al. 2021, Ibarra 1993, Srivastava 2015). For instance, one study found that female college graduates with less gender-diverse peer networks accepted lower starting salaries, even after controlling for human capital factors, job characteristics, and institutional prestige (Belliveau 2005). A study of the outcomes of ten years of salary negotiations in a technology company found that social ties within the organization explained the negative effect of being a racial minority on pay increases. Whites were more likely to know someone within the company, and controlling for this factor dramatically reduced the significance of race on salary negotiation outcomes (Seidel et al. 2000).

Homophilous social networks may also affect the quality of information and advice one receives. Imagine a work environment in which men tend to be paid more than women, perhaps because of differences in how men and women are compensated [e.g., size of bonuses (Grund 2015) or “off-grade” pay arrangements (Smith-Doerr et al. 2019)] or because women are underrepresented in the highest-paid occupations (Goldin 2014). If, in this environment, men consult men on their pay negotiations and women consult women, gender differences in forms or level of compensation might lead them to receive systematically different information and advice. To the extent that women enter negotiations with lower expectations than men, they are likely to reach worse outcomes (Zetik & Stuhlmacher 2002).

Gender stereotypes (e.g., men are better negotiators than women) also have more potential to influence negotiation outcomes when parties are unsure on what basis to reach agreement. As illustrated earlier in the study comparing negotiations over the price of motorcycle headlamps versus lamp beads for jewelry (Bear & Babcock 2012), the likelihood that men outperform women is heightened in masculine-stereotypic negotiations. Using the same motorcycle-headlamp negotiation exercise, other researchers tested experimentally whether reducing ambiguity would decrease gender effects in competitive bargaining performance (Bowles et al. 2005). They manipulated whether the negotiator had information on what their manager would consider a good price (i.e., low ambiguity versus high ambiguity if no clear standard). When negotiators understood what constituted a good outcome, men’s bargaining advantage diminished (Bowles et al. 2005). More recent meta-analytic research has revealed the same pattern over a large body of studies (Mazei et al. 2015). As **Figure 2** illustrates, decreasing ambiguity about what is negotiable (i.e., scope and standards for agreement) is a lever for reducing the influence of gender on negotiation.

How to Negotiate?

The *Dilbert* comic strip also illustrates the problem of ambiguity about how to negotiate. If there were a clear policy on technology requests (e.g., who can ask for what on what basis), Tina might be able use those guidelines to legitimize her negotiation attempt as a standard request for a second monitor (e.g., “Company guidelines indicate that requests for equipment to enhance productivity should be submitted to our managers. . .”). Alternatively, if the policy suggested she was not eligible for a second monitor, she could approach the negotiation by recognizing that she was bending organizational norms and craft an argument for why an exception in her case was appropriate

(e.g., “I recognize that the writing staff has not yet been included in the second-monitor policy, but I would like to talk with you about why it would enhance my productivity. . .”) (Bowles et al. 2019, Bowles & Thomason 2021). It’s unclear how responsive the Pointed-haired Boss would be to any type of negotiation approach, but research suggests that resistance to women’s self-advocacy is significantly reduced when negotiators explain why their proposal is legitimate and in their counterparts’ interests (Bowles & Babcock 2013; see also Bowles et al. 2019 for organizational examples). It is challenging to craft a proposal that is perceived as legitimate and in others’ interests absent good information.

Multiple studies suggest that ambiguity about negotiating norms increases gender differences in the propensity to negotiate, particularly over gendered subjects like pay or access to family-friendly work policies. In one series of experiments, researchers found that when they explained to young professionals that negotiating employment packages was common and an expected skill in new hires, men and women were equally prone to negotiate compensation. However, when the researchers provided no information on negotiation norms, women were significantly more relieved than men to simply have their first offer accepted (Kray & Gelfand 2009). A large-scale field experiment with job-seekers for administrative positions in major US metropolitan areas similarly found that when no information was provided about whether wages were negotiable, men were significantly more likely than women to negotiate for higher pay (Leibbrandt & List 2015). In contrast, when job-seekers were explicitly informed that wages were negotiable, women were as, if not more, likely to negotiate pay as compared to men (Leibbrandt & List 2015). Organizational studies similarly indicate that ambiguity around family-friendly work practices (e.g., lack of clear, explicitly gender-inclusive policies) inhibits employees from negotiating for access and may be particularly discouraging to men (Greenberg & Landry 2011, Kelly & Kalev 2006, Ladge et al. 2015). In sum, to reduce gender effects in organizational negotiations, it may be necessary to clarify not only that particular resources or opportunities are negotiable but also who is expected or entitled to negotiate for them and how.

Who Are the Parties as Negotiators?

How might gender influence organizational negotiations when parties are relatively unknown to one another? Research on the psychology of gender bias in organizations suggests that gender-stereotypic judgments are more likely when evaluators have little relevant information about a target (Heilman 2012). More broadly, research on stereotypes in social cognition (for reviews, see Banaji & Greenwald 2016, Ellemers 2018) suggests that the less parties understand about their counterparts as negotiators, the more prone they will be to interpret and predict their counterparts’ behavior in gendered ways. One study found that the starting salaries of female MBAs were significantly higher if they had done a “tryout” internship with the firm before hiring, whereas there was no comparable effect for men—suggesting that increased familiarity reduced gender biases in women’s job offer negotiations (Sterling & Fernandez 2018). We propose that as negotiators gain information that seems relevant and accurate about their counterparts, they are likely to view them in more individuated ways (Banaji & Greenwald 2016, Heilman 2012)—provided the new information does not reinforce stereotypic expectations (Sherman et al. 2005, Kray & Kennedy 2017), as might be the case with a character like the Pointy-haired Boss.

Ambiguity of What, How, and Who: Key Takeaways

As **Figure 2** depicts, decreasing ambiguity may be an effective lever for constraining the potential for gender effects in organizational negotiations. A more objectively transparent understanding

of what is negotiable reduces the potential for gender biases in negotiation expectations and outcomes (Mazei et al. 2015). With a better understanding of who can negotiate and how, gender-based concerns about violating social expectations tend to dissipate (Kray & Gelfand 2009, Leibbrandt & List 2015). Similarly, parties may be less likely to draw inferences from the gender of their counterparts (e.g., about their negotiating type or alternatives to agreement) when they have more useful and relevant individuating information (Banaji & Greenwald 2016, Heilman 2012). Importantly, it may be easier for organizational leaders to reduce ambiguity in organizational practices than to change some of the factors that give rise to and shape gender biases (e.g., broader social-cultural or business norms).

PREDICTING WHEN GENDER MATTERS IN ORGANIZATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

As **Figure 2** illustrates, we propose conceptualizing the potential for gender effects in negotiation as being controlled by two levers. One lever (in red) heightens the salience and relevance of gender within the negotiating context and increases the potential for gender biases to influence parties' behavior or outcomes. As discussed above, at least four levels of factors influence the salience and relevance of gender: the broader social-cultural context, intersecting status-linked social identities, organizational demography and culture, and the subject of negotiation. The other lever (in blue) represents the degree of ambiguity surrounding what is negotiable, how to negotiate, or who the parties are as negotiators. As previously discussed, decreased ambiguity reduces the potential for gender to influence behavioral expectations or the bases for agreement. The shaded boxes indicate the likelihood of gender effects under these basic conditions, with the greatest likelihood predicted in situations in which the salience and relevance of gender is high and parties lack objective norms or benchmarks to guide behavior (upper right-hand quadrant).

The bottom left of **Figure 2** lists organizational characteristics that favor male over female negotiators. Notably, these characteristics are common in leading business schools where negotiation is taught. Indeed, the above-cited competitive negotiation between automobile executives over the price of the motorcycle headlamps was for many years the introductory exercise in a popular negotiation course at a major business school with a majority-male student population and faculty. These are also common characteristics of many organizations, including corporations, tech ventures, investment firms, and major government institutions.

In what type of organizational context would the salience and relevance of gender be low? Such a context would tend to be gender diverse and inclusive (Shore et al. 2011), with a demographically balanced hierarchy and work culture that values stereotypically feminine and masculine strengths in all employees, such as attention to relationships as well as competitive performance (Kray & Kennedy 2017). As indicated in the bottom-left quadrant of the central grid in **Figure 2**, the addition of clear negotiating norms and standards in such a context would make systematic gender differences in negotiation behavior or performance highly unlikely. If the degree of ambiguity were dialed up (i.e., moving from bottom-left to bottom-right quadrant of the grid), the potential for gender effects could increase to the extent that parties rely on gendered norms from past experience or the broader social environment (e.g., national culture or industry standards) to guide them.

As discussed below, the upper-left quadrant of **Figure 2** may be the most interesting from a practical perspective. It depicts situations in which the relevance and salience of gender are high but negotiators are guided by transparently objective norms and benchmarks. As described in the previous section, decreasing ambiguity in gendered negotiating contexts tends to reduce, if not eliminate, otherwise predictable gender effects. Given how difficult it is to reduce gender biases,

the most efficient and effective mechanism for reducing gender effects may be to slide back the ambiguity lever with increased transparency (Bohnet 2016).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In this section, we harness the study of gender in negotiation to offer practical suggestions for mitigating the inequitable effects of gender biases on organizational negotiations. We highlight evidence-based strategies for both individuals and organizations.

Suggestions for Individuals

There are a lot of calls these days to “fix the system, not the people”—to make organizational leaders and policymakers responsible for eliminating gender bias, rather than those who have been historically marginalized. Along these lines, one might say, “Forget Tina, and focus on her boss.” For multiple reasons, we argue that leaving people like Tina out of strategies for reducing gender inequality would be shortsighted. Even if all of the Pointy-haired Bosses of the world could be replaced by well-meaning advocates of diversity and inclusion, relying solely on top-down systemic solutions presumes that the historically marginalized have no role in changing systems from the bottom up. We contest that premise on descriptive, as well as normative, grounds (Kray & Kennedy 2017, Meyerson & Scully 1995). Studies of the lived experiences of managers and executives reveal that women use negotiation as a tool to bend and shape organizational career paths, including gaining and creating unprecedented leadership opportunities and solutions to work-family conflicts (Bowles et al. 2019). Individuals, like Tina, are and should be part of the process of negotiating more equitable work environments (Sturm 2009). Moreover, evidence suggests that individuals can take effective actions to reduce distortionary influences of gender on negotiation processes, some of which are outlined below (see also Bowles 2014, Bowles & Thomason 2021, Kray 2007, Kulik & Olekalns 2012).

Develop your negotiation skills. Tina’s negotiation attempt illustrates why simply insisting that women negotiate is not helpful advice (see also Exley et al. 2019). As explained above, the best evidence suggests that gender differences in the propensity to negotiate are a function of anticipated social resistance—not gumption or confidence. Nevertheless, recognizing that speaking up is not the problem, there is evidence that using mutual gains negotiation strategies—the foundation of most negotiation training in professional education (e.g., Lax & Sebenius 1986, Thompson 2005)—can enhance social, as well as material, outcomes in negotiation.

Specifically, as mentioned above, experimental research has shown that women can enhance their persuasiveness and reduce the risk of social backlash by explaining why their proposal is legitimate (e.g., justified or appropriate in this situation) and by communicating that they are taking the other party’s perspective into account (Bowles & Babcock 2013). Such strategies are also prevalent in qualitative research on women’s career negotiations (Bowles et al. 2019, Bowles & Thomason 2021). For instance, evaluators perceive women’s propensity to negotiate for higher pay as more legitimate if they explain it’s a skill they bring to their work (Bowles & Babcock 2013; see also Kray & Gelfand 2009). There are numerous case examples of women negotiating entry into male-dominated fields for which they were not traditionally qualified by explaining the distinctive competencies they would bring to the role and organization, how they have negotiated their work locations or schedules in ways that served their organizations and their families (e.g., “I’ll be more effective if . . .”), and how they have negotiated for new leadership positions by laying out a compelling strategic vision that served their businesses (Bowles et al. 2019; see also Bowles

& Thomason 2021). The more negotiations are approached from the perspective of mutual (as opposed to competitive) gains, the more gender congruent—and less gender constraining—they are for female negotiators (Bowles & Babcock 2013, Kray 2007, Kray et al. 2002).

This mutual-gains approach could be perceived as reinforcing gender stereotypes of women as cooperative negotiators (Mazei et al. 2020); more importantly, it fits with evidence-based best practice in negotiation (e.g., see Malhotra & Bazerman 2007, Thompson 2005). Notably, people who believe they can develop their negotiating competencies (as compared to having a fixed conception of who is a “good negotiator”) are less influenced by stereotypes and more receptive to evidence challenging potentially biased assumptions (Kray & Haselhuhn 2007). In sum, negotiators can grow their capacity to negotiate effectively to create more equitable organizations for themselves and others (Kray 2007, Mazei et al. 2015).

Address potential sources of gender bias. Individuals can use their awareness of potential sources of gender bias in negotiation to reduce the influence of such bias (Kray 2007). Parties can overcome the threat of negative stereotypes by self-identifying with other positively stereotyped aspects of their identity (e.g., being a trained negotiator, experienced professional, or effective advocate) (Bear & Babcock 2017, Kray et al. 2001). It is also possible to cognitively and verbally reframe negatively stereotyped negotiator qualities to highlight flip-side strengths (e.g., “cooperative” and “trusting” means “good at building lasting working relationships” as opposed to “easily duped in a single competitive round”) (Kray et al. 2002, 2014; Kray & Kennedy 2017). Of course, organizational leaders should be partners in efforts to raise awareness of gender biases and reduce their influence, but individuals should also feel empowered to do this work.

Reduce ambiguity. Again, one of the most efficient and effective ways to minimize gender biases in negotiation is to reduce ambiguity about what is negotiable, how to negotiate, and who the parties are. As discussed above, with awareness of the potential limitations of relying on information and advice from similar others (e.g., women consulting women about compensation standards or men consulting men about accessing family-friendly work policies), individuals can make a conscious effort to consult diverse people and data sources to debias their negotiation preparation. This includes understanding organizational norms and standards, as well as legal rights and protections (Dunn 2021). During negotiations, parties can reduce ambiguity by alerting other parties to the objective norms and standards that support the legitimacy of their negotiation proposal (Bowles & Thomason 2021), including important individuating information they would like to be understood about them (Heilman 2012).

Suggestions for Organizations

Many organizations are feeling pressure to demonstrate their commitment to building more equitable organizations, commonly by demonstrating more pay transparency and by increasing diversity in their pipeline to senior roles. As described above, some inequalities in pay and occupational advancement emerge from biased negotiation processes, including systematic differences in what people from different groups know about what is negotiable and how. For example, in the field studies described above, racial inequity in starting salaries was explained by whether candidates knew someone in the organization (Seidel et al. 2000), and gender differences in the propensity to negotiate pay hinged on whether job advertisements listed pay as negotiable (Leibbrandt & List 2015).

Many organizations are instituting implicit-bias training and other educational programming to enhance awareness of the effects of stereotyping and discrimination. However, simply informing

people about gender stereotypes and biases is not sufficient to reduce their influence and may even heighten reliance on them (Duguid & Thomas-Hunt 2015). As illustrated by Tina's boss, exposure to research findings doesn't reliably motivate less biased or more equitable behavior.

Improved data collection and analysis can help organizations uncover, diagnose, and address systemic inequities in negotiated outcomes (Bohnet 2016), such as in access to productivity-enhancing technology or resources (Hopkins 1999), career-advancing work (Babcock et al. 2017), compensation (Gerhart & Rynes 1991, Grund 2015), or family-friendly work policies (Kelly et al. 2010, Kelly & Kalev 2006, Ladge et al. 2015). And, as **Figure 2** illustrates, reducing ambiguity with regard to negotiating norms and standards, and ensuring that organizational leaders and managers equitably apply those transparent standards, may be the most efficient means of reducing the likelihood of gender effects in organizational negotiations. Managers can collect information through surveys and focus groups to discern whether some or all employees feel confused or left in the dark—like our case protagonist, Tina—about what is negotiable and how to negotiate. Diversity task forces and employee resource groups are other valuable sources of information on the differential concerns and challenges of diverse organizational members. Moreover, such groups can serve as constructive spaces for developing and communicating new policies and practices to enhance equity and inclusion (Dobbin & Kalev 2007, Sturm 2009).

One might ask, "Why would organizational leaders want their employees to be good negotiators?" Employers cannot meet every negotiation request, and workers should not expect them to do so. But leaders should recognize that when employees and managers are skilled negotiators, they become more capable of creating value for the organization, as well as for themselves. Organizations that gain a reputation for creative and constructive joint problem-solving between managers and employees have the potential to enhance productivity and innovation, worker engagement, and organizational equity.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

At the beginning of our article, we described how research on gender in negotiation has transformed from a study of gender as personality to a study of gender in context. We hope this review has made transparent that the gender of a negotiator should no longer be seen as a meaningful predictor of negotiation behavior or performance. Moreover, we anticipate that this rich vein of negotiation research has considerable transformation ahead (see Olekalns & Kennedy 2020 for a compendium of research ideas).

For instance, research on gender in negotiation has only begun to scratch the surface of how gender and other intersecting social identities influence men's negotiation experiences in organizations. Mazei et al. (2021) have laid out a set of propositions related to how certain negotiation contexts may threaten, as well as reinforce, men's masculine identity. Relatedly, the conditions that enable working fathers to negotiate for access to family-friendly work practices are only provisionally understood (Bowles et al. 2021, Ladge et al. 2015). The diversity in men's negotiating experiences, depending on their social-cultural context or relative social status, has also only just begun to be explored (Al Dabbagh et al. 2016; Hernandez et al. 2019; Toosi et al. 2019, 2020).

More broadly, there is an acute need for deeper and more inclusive theorizing and data collection on intersectional effects of gender on negotiation (Toosi et al. 2020). As explored in this review, we anticipate that this new research direction will advance understanding of when and to what extent documented gender effects relate specifically to gender or, more generally, power or social status (e.g., Al Dabbagh et al. 2016, Rucker et al. 2018). As our social-political and social-scientific understanding of gender evolves, we anticipate learning from research that extends beyond binary social constructions of men and women (Clair et al. 2019).

Greater investment in organizationally grounded research is needed for research on gender in negotiation to grow in its relevance and usefulness to practice and to contribute to the diagnosis and mitigation of gender inequality. Critical in this regard is research that expands the aperture of investigation beyond compensation to include negotiations over role (e.g., scope of authority, professional development, occupational advancement) and workload (e.g., schedule, travel, location) (Bowles et al. 2019). Everyday organizational negotiations on topics such as work assignments (e.g., who takes notes versus pitches the client) and work hours (e.g., who travels or works late) may be meaningfully influenced by gendered norms (Bochantin & Dickson 2020) and contribute over time to gender differences in occupational attainment, which are at the core of the gender wage gap (Bowles et al. 2019, Goldin 2014).

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened visibility of how negotiations with employers are hinged in a “two-level game” to negotiations with domestic partners (Bowles & McGinn 2008, Thomason 2021). Organizational scholars seeking to understand the barriers to women’s occupational advancement will benefit from a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how working parents negotiate work-family boundaries within organizations (e.g., building on Bowles et al. 2019, Greenberg & Landry 2011, Ladge et al. 2015). Deeper insight into how couples negotiate whether women work (Bursztyn et al. 2020) and whose career takes priority (Livingston 2014) will lend further insight into intraorganizational negotiations. Critical too is recognition that an extended network of relationships—including children, parents, in-laws, friends, as well as parental partners—supports and constrains work-family negotiations and women’s occupational attainment (Thomason 2021).

CONCLUSION

Returning to Tina and her Pointy-haired Boss, we hope readers will recognize that the comic strip, beyond poking fun at biased managers, prods scholars and educators to take responsibility for reporting on and teaching about gender effects in negotiation as situational phenomena as opposed to personality differences. In addition to the gender of the characters, what should now stand out in the comic are situational considerations, including the American cultural context, the characters’ intersecting identities (e.g., both socioeconomically privileged yet unequal in occupational status), the masculine-stereotypic and male-dominated organizational context, as well as the Pointy-haired Boss’s tragically comical mangling of negotiation research. Finally, to get to a place where Tina’s failed negotiation would seem less funny because it is so intuitively familiar, we hope for growing recognition of the importance of women’s agency as negotiators to build more equitable organizations and more widespread efforts by organizational leaders and managers to even the negotiating field for all.

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