

Reversing the Gender Gap in Negotiations: An Exploration of Stereotype Regeneration

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We examine how gender stereotypes affect performance in mixed-gender negotiations. We extend recent work demonstrating that stereotype activation leads to a male advantage and a complementary female disadvantage at the bargaining table (Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001). In the present investigation, we regenerate the stereotype of effective negotiators by associating stereotypically feminine skills with negotiation success. In Experiment 1, women performed better in mixed-gender negotiations when stereotypically feminine traits were linked to successful negotiating, but not when gender-neutral traits were linked to negotiation success. Gender differences were mediated by the performance expectations and goals set by negotiators. In Experiment 2, we regenerated the stereotype of effective negotiators by linking stereotypically masculine or feminine traits with negotiation ineffectiveness. Women outperformed men in mixed-gender negotiations when stereotypically masculine traits were linked to poor negotiation performance, but men outperformed women

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when stereotypically feminine traits were linked to poor negotiation performance. Implications for stereotype threat theory and negotiations are discussed. © 2002 Elsevier Science (USA)

One widely held stereotype about women is that they are less effective at negotiating compared to men. For example, a typical negotiation scenario involves buying a new car. Popular wisdom suggests that women bring a man with them to the dealership so that they are “taken seriously” and given a fair shake. Indeed, one audit of new car dealerships revealed that salespeople quoted women significantly higher prices than they did men who used exactly the same scripted bargaining strategies as the women (Ayres & Siegelman, 1995). But over and above any bias on the part of the dealer, women carry an additional burden with them into the dealership, which is the possibility that anything they say or do will be interpreted in light of the stereotype about women’s inferior negotiating ability (Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001). This burden is termed stereotype threat (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995) and several investigations have found that people’s behavior is affected by the mere activation of a stereotype or simply making a stereotype-relevant task diagnostic of ability.

The question we address in this article is whether this burden be lifted, or even transferred to men, to improve women’s performance at the bargaining table? In answering this question we extend theory and research in a number of important ways. First, we provide a strong test of Steele’s theory of stereotype threat by demonstrating that merely linking traits that are stereotypic of a group to performance outcomes can produce stereotype threat effects. We do this by manipulating whether positive or negative outcomes are generally connected to stereotypically feminine and masculine traits. Second, we provide the first clear evidence that stereotype threat affects performance expectations and these performance expectations mediate the observed decrements in performance. Finally, we have improved on earlier research that confounded positivity with mutuality (a social category shared by male counterparts) when exploring whether positive stereotypes can improve the negotiation performance of women (Kray et al., 2001).

STEREOTYPES AND PERFORMANCE

A wide body of evidence suggests that stereotypes have a pernicious effect on the behavior and performance of the stereotyped. Even the United States Supreme Court in *Hopkins v. Price Waterhouse* recognized that stereotyping can result in unequal outcomes in organizational settings (Fiske, 1993). In that particular case, a woman was denied partnership in a prestigious accounting firm, despite evidence of superior job performance, because her behavior did not conform to gender-based expectations. The Supreme Court noted that stereotypes are particularly influential when decisions are based on qualitative, idiosyncratic dimensions (i.e., interpersonal skill) rather than on quantitative

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