

Who goes to the bargaining table?
Understanding gender variation in the initiation of negotiations

Deborah A. Small, University of Pennsylvania

Michele Gelfand, University of Maryland

Linda Babcock, Carnegie Mellon University

Hilary Gettman, University of Maryland

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Abstract

Unlike typical negotiation experiments, we investigate when people *initiate* negotiations when there are no overt prescriptions to negotiate. In a new paradigm, participants played a word game and were subsequently offered the lowest compensation possible by the experimenter. Study 1 illustrated that, when there were no prescriptions to negotiate, females initiated negotiations over compensation at a much lower rate than males. Study 2 examined how situational ambiguity affected initiation of negotiation, demonstrating that strong cues about the *negotiability* of payment increased rates of asking. Yet, cues to “negotiate” did not reduce the gender gap. Study 3 explored the differential meaning that males and females’ have for the concepts of *negotiating* for things compared to *asking* for things. As predicted, framing situations as negotiations was found to be more aversive for females than framing them as about asking. In Study 4, we show the consequences of these differential frames: Cues to *ask* increased the rate for which females asked for greater compensation, eliminating the gender gap, showing that framing the prospect as a negotiation inhibited the initiation of negotiation for females relative to the less masculine, less competitive frame, “ask.” These findings demonstrate that conceptions of negotiation are gendered, which results in important behavioral implications.

Who gets to the bargaining table?

Understanding gender variation in the initiation of negotiations

In virtually all experimental negotiation research, individuals are instructed that they will conduct a negotiation. Often negotiators are given explicit instructions – i.e., to make offers and receive counteroffers, to achieve as much value for themselves as possible, etc. Although this research has illuminated the psychological and behavioral processes that are related to negotiation strategies and outcomes, there is very little research on the perception of the *negotiability* of situations when negotiation is not prescribed or on the tendency to initiate negotiation more generally.

This void in the literature is significant because many situations are not transparently negotiable. Although many Americans likely know that the price of a car is negotiable, most situations are far more ambiguous. In order to obtain greater value for themselves, individuals must recognize that an opportunity for a negotiation exists and they must initiate a negotiation. Otherwise, the status quo is likely to remain.

Consider, for example, the case of a university professor. Although it is typical to negotiate over salary and teaching load when one is first hired, what is negotiable after one is on the job is far less clear. In fact, numerous resources can be negotiated throughout one's faculty career, including reduced teaching loads, summer support, increases in pay, office space, computer upgrades, etc. Yet these situations need to be recognized as negotiable and capitalized upon, often on an individual basis.

Indeed, recent changes in the workplace highlight the need for individuals to take first action if a change or improvement of their circumstances is desired. Due to new emerging forms of organization (flattened hierarchies, lower formalization, increased participation), the steady

decline of unionism (fewer standardized work contracts), and increasing rates of job turnover, employees have opportunities to bargain that are historically unprecedented (Rousseau, 2001). If in fact a considerable amount of the employment relationship is negotiable, and if the flexibilities of contracts are not made explicit, then an individual's effectiveness and success will depend on their recognition of the opportunity to negotiate for resources, for those who initiate negotiations will inevitably acquire more resources than those who do not (Babcock, Laschever, Gelfand, & Small 2003). Surprisingly, despite employment trends suggesting such negotiations are increasingly prevalent, there is a dearth of research on *who* initiates negotiations, and whether these opportunities are disproportionately capitalized upon by certain groups, males and females specifically. The question of whether (and why) gender differences exist in the propensity to initiate negotiations is important, given the persistent wage gap (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002; Keaveny & Inderrieden, 2000), glass ceiling (Tharenou, 2001), and the fact that women advance in their careers at much slower rates than males (Valian, 1998; Tharenou, 1999).

In this article, we seek to begin filling this void by examining gender differences in the propensity to initiate negotiations. Rather than providing participants with a five-issue negotiation task – as is typical in the negotiation literature – we examine who seeks to negotiate within a controlled setting. We demonstrate that females are less likely to initiate negotiations (Study 1) and we show that cues to negotiate do not reduce the gender gap (Study 2). Consistent with the extant framing literature (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; McFarland & Miller, 1994), we show that subtle changes in the framing of negotiations has important behavioral implications that are gendered (Studies 3 and 4). In support of our hypotheses, framing situations as *opportunities for negotiating* elicits much more negative evaluations and lower propensity to negotiate than framing situations as *opportunities for asking* among females. In what follows,

we briefly discuss previous research on gender and negotiation before introducing the hypotheses and method of the studies.

Gender and the Propensity to Initiate Negotiations

Gender and negotiation research has typically examined gender differences in skills and strategies, expectations, and outcomes. However, this research has largely been atheoretical, treating gender as a simple demographic variable, rather than investigating what underlying psychological processes are responsible for gender differences, and perhaps not surprisingly, the literature has yielded inconsistent effects (see Gelfand, Major, Raver, Nishii, & O'Brien, 2004; Thompson, 1990). Recently, the negotiation literature has begun to address this gap by exploring the social psychological factors driving gendered behavior at the negotiation table. For example, researchers have found that the activation of gender stereotypes affects performance, with the direction depending on the valence of the activation (Kray, Galinsky & Thompson, 2001; 2002). Others have theorized that the activation of the relational self is an important driver of gender differences at the negotiation table (Gelfand, et al., 2004). Still others have shown that once at the bargaining table, women are less assertive in making demands than men, either because they feel less entitled (Barron, 2003) or because they feel less efficacious in masculine/competitive types of tasks (Beyer, 1990; Lenney, 1977; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) and in tasks involving influencing others (Instone, Major, & Bunker, 1983).

Although this research includes some impressive evidence of how and why males and females behave differently at the negotiating table, as discussed above, it does not address the key issue of *who* gets to the table in the first place, if such opportunities are disproportionately capitalized upon by males, and what sorts of situational cues inform individuals that negotiation is a viable option. While it has been suggested that females are less likely to negotiate than

males, very little theory or empirical research has addressed this issue (see Gerhart & Rynes, 1991 and Babcock, et al., 2004 for exceptions), which is the purpose of this research.

For a negotiation to transpire, recognition by the individual that the situation is amenable to change is a necessary condition. Perceiving a situation to be negotiable likely involves both intra-individual factors and structural conditions, both of which are likely to be gendered. For example, individuals vary in locus of control, or the degree to which they believe that they can influence their circumstances and opportunities by taking action (Rotter, 1966). Individuals with greater internal locus of control should perceive negotiability more easily and frequently than individuals with an external locus of control, who instead believe that situational factors are primarily responsible for outcomes. Males score higher on internal locus of control than do females (Strickland & Haley, 1980; Parkes, 1985), which suggests that males may be more likely to perceive negotiability as well.

Similarly, females hold less power than males in Western societies, and even low-power males benefit from group membership (Henley & LaFrance, 1984). Power is associated with approach-related tendencies, including directing attention to rewards and means for obtaining rewards (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). To the extent that perceiving negotiability involves attending to rewards and means for obtaining them, the differential power experienced by males and females may further contribute to the gender gap in perceiving negotiability.

Additionally, the perception of negotiability becomes more apparent through information provided by others. For instance in a work environment, when a colleague informs an individual of a resource she obtained through negotiation or explicitly advises to negotiate to obtain something, it teaches individuals about the environment and what sorts of resources are negotiable. Therefore, individuals benefit from having a well-connected mentor and from

communicating with powerful and knowledgeable individuals. Evidence suggests that males have an advantage in this respect. Females tend to lack quality mentors relative to males (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) and their social networks are less dense and less connected to powerful decision makers within organizations (Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1992; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998). Thus, social structural conditions in the workplace may prohibit females from obtaining information about the negotiability of resources.

In sum, males may be more likely to perceive situations to be negotiable for a number of overlapping reasons. By feeling in control and being connected to important sources of information, males are likely to enjoy an advantage over females when it comes to recognizing opportunities to negotiate. If recognizing that an opportunity exists to negotiate is a crucial first step of a initiating a negotiation, then gender differences in this behavior likely exist as well.

In the current research, we examine whether males and females differ in their propensity to initiate negotiation. We build upon our prior work in which we surveyed a sample of 227 working adults and asked how recently they had initiated negotiations. In this work, male respondents indicated that they initiated negotiations two to four times as recently as female respondents (Babcock, et al., 2004). A separate study comparing male and female masters graduate students found that 51.9% of males negotiated their job offer, whereas only 11.5% of females did. Not surprisingly, females received average annual salaries of 8.5% less than males. When projected across the course of women's careers, this starting salary gap would be even more striking since raises, bonuses, and other compensation are typically based upon initial salary (Gerhart & Rynes, 1991).

These studies are important for demonstrating the real world consequences of gender differences in the propensity to initiate negotiation. In the current set of studies we test the

internal validity of this gender effect by examining the initiation of negotiation in the laboratory, under a controlled set of conditions. Additionally, we introduce a variety of cues to negotiate to a) examine the extent to which signaling negotiability augments the initiation of negotiation for males and females and to b) test how the framing of such an opportunity might encourage or inhibit the initiation of negotiation.

To test the prediction that males will be more likely to initiate a negotiation in an ambiguous situation than females, we created a paradigm to examine this behavior in a controlled experimental setting. In this method, research participants play a word game that pilot testing showed has no gender advantage in exchange for cash, and are subsequently offered the minimum payment possible. We measured whether participants negotiated for higher payment from the experimenter. This method is analogous to important career advancement opportunities (asking for more money for a task), but allows us to control for the variability in industry norms, job characteristics, work experience, etc.

By introducing this new paradigm, we seek to broaden the scope of current negotiation research from primarily examining what happens at the negotiation table to *who* gets to the negotiation in the first place. Note that while this method has the advantage of controlling for factors such as status and social network differences within organizations, it is a conservative test because it minimizes any gender differences due to such social-structural factors. Negotiations, we have argued, are not always prescribed, and in fact, may often need to be recognized as an option in everyday situations. The scientific approach to negotiation, however, is at odds with this reality in that it only examines situations that are strong (Mischel, 1977)- i.e., situations when people are told they will be negotiating and are given a 5-issue bargaining task to do so.

To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to examine who negotiates in a controlled setting, without overt prescription.

Study 1

This study explored whether people would ask for money in a situation in which they are not explicitly told that negotiation is an option. Participants were told that they would receive cash payment for their participation in a word game task, ranging from \$3-10. Following the boggle task, all participants were offered the minimum (\$3) from the experimenter. Participants were not informed of how payment was determined nor given any performance feedback. If they initiated a negotiation, they could receive more money (up to \$10), and if not, they received just \$3. This situation intentionally mirrors many real world situations, in which individuals could receive a better deal, but because this possibility is not explicit, a gain can only be realized by individuals who initiate negotiations. We predicted that more males than females would initiate negotiation with the experimenter. In addition to testing our prediction about gender, this study served as a pilot test, in order to validate that the task (playing boggle) is gender-neutral. Specifically, we sought to make certain that males and females did not differ in their perceived or actual performance in the game.

Method

Participants. A total of 74 individuals (35 males, 39 females) participated in exchange for cash payment between \$3-10. Participants' ages ranged from 17-40 with a mean of 23 years. Of the 74 individuals, 86% were students.

Procedure. Instructions explained that participation includes four rounds of the word game "Boggle," to be played alone in a private cubicle. For each round, the participant was instructed to shake a cube of lettered dice so that all letters fall into a grid at the bottom of the

cube. A timer was set, and participants searched the grid of letters for as many words as possible until time was up. They were instructed to search for and list all words formed from letters that adjoin horizontally, vertically, or diagonally to the left, right, or up-and-down. According to the game rules, no letter could be used more than once within a single word.

The four rounds of this game lasted 3 minutes each. When finished with all four rounds, instructions reminded the participants: *You have now completed 4 rounds of boggle and will be compensated between \$3-10. Please indicate to the experimenter that you are finished, so that they can score your rounds. Then you will be paid.*

The game, Boggle, is typically played competitively, and players can gauge their own performance by comparing it to the performance of others. However, when played autonomously, as in our design, a player has no external cues to make this evaluation. Moreover, because the maximum number of words possible in any given round depends on how the lettered dice fall, the maximum possible score can vary greatly from game to game, so there are no evident reference points. These properties of the game limit self-assessment to merely internal cues, which may differ by gender.

Experimenters. Two experimenters (one male and one female) conducted the study; each presided over approximately half of the sample. Experimenters were blind to the hypothesis of the study. They were trained to standardize their interactions with participants and to adhere to specific scripts (see below) for offering payment to each participant.

Dependent Measure. Each participant waited approximately 3 minutes in a cubicle while the experimenter tallied the words. Then, the experimenter approached the participant privately, held out \$3 and said, "*Here's \$3. Is \$3 O.K.?*" If a participant asked for more, the experimenter gave the participant the requested amount up to the \$10 maximum. If the participant

complained, but did not *ask*, the experimenter did not offer more, and the participant received \$3. If the participant asked further questions about how the payment was determined, the experimenter explained that a full report of the research would be provided to them when the study was complete. The crux of this paying procedure is that any participant could receive \$10, if only they initiate a negotiation with the experimenter. If instead, the participant accepts the status quo *or* complains about the status quo but *does not ask* for a larger payment, the payment remained the minimum, \$3.

Additional measures. At the end of the study, participants answered a series of questions designed to assess perceptions of their performance in the game. Lastly, participants self-reported their age, gender, and student/non-student status.

Results and Discussion

Of the 74 participants, nine participants (12%) asked for more money. This low rate of asking for more cash payment is not surprising given the relative lack of any available cues in the situation informing participants that asking is acceptable or strategically wise. However, this prime-free, experimental context provides a precise means of measuring base-rates of initiating negotiation in the absence of such clues and external motivating factors.

Since all nine individuals that *negotiated*, asked for the maximum payment (\$10), or for more than the maximum, all nine received \$10. Therefore, we employed a binary dependent variable in all analyses (asked for more: yes/no).

Gender differences. Of the male participants, 23% requested more money, whereas only 3% of female participants asked for more, a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 7.11, p < .01$). All nine participants (8 males + 1 female) who asked, asked the female experimenter.¹

These differences in the propensity to initiate negotiation were not driven by actual or perceived differences in performance. There was no gender difference in boggle performance (Mean words among males=11.6; Mean words among females=10.3; $t(71) = -1.02, p = .31$). Moreover, males and females did not differ in their perceptions of their own performance. In response to the question, “*Compared to the average student, how well do you think you did today in boggle?*” on a 5-point likert scale (ranging from 1=Much worse than the average student to 5=Much better than the average student), there was no difference ($t(68) = -.95, p = .38$; Male Mean=3.1; Female Mean=2.9). Neither perceived nor actual performance was correlated with asking for either gender.

Summary. This study is the first behavioral demonstration of a gender difference in the propensity to initiate a negotiation. To our knowledge, it is the first laboratory study on negotiation in which participants are not informed explicitly that negotiation is the prescribed behavior. As predicted, males were far more likely to ask for money than females, despite no apparent gender differences in actual and perceived performance. Surprisingly, all of those who negotiated did so with a female experimenter. It is possible that this is due to expectations that females would provide more money than males. However, given that the experimenters may have varied on a number of characteristics (i.e., attractiveness), this may not be a reliable finding. In the studies that follow, we trained professional actors who were matched on attractiveness and examined whether this effect is replicable.

As noted, this study evaluated rates of initiating negotiation in a situation with few cues about the negotiability of the situation. Without any explicit cue to initiate a negotiation, the overall asking rate was very low (12%). In the following studies, we examine the question of how cues about the negotiability of the situation affect asking rates between males and females.

Study 2

In this experiment we used an identical paradigm as in Study 1, but we varied *situational ambiguity* by providing information to some participants about the possibility of initiating negotiation with the experimenter. Two possible patterns could emerge. On the one hand, gender differences in the initiation of negotiation may depend upon the strength of the situation (Mischel, 1977). Strong situations limit the number of acceptable behavioral patterns and reduce individual variation. By contrast, weak situations have highly ambiguous behavioral cues and provide more potential for individual differences to emerge. The situation participants faced in Study 1 was notably weak- lacking explicit cues to negotiate. It is possible that gender differences could be eliminated in a stronger situation, or one for which the opportunity for a negotiation was more apparent.

An equally plausible alternative is that gender differences will *persist* despite cues to negotiate. This could occur because recognizing that an opportunity to negotiate exists may not be the only factor inhibiting females from initiating a negotiation. Indeed, based on previous research which has found that negotiation tasks are perceived to be masculine and imply competitiveness (Kray, et al., 2001, 2002), it is possible that females may feel more inhibited about initiating negotiations even when they perceive the opportunity to do so. We investigated both possibilities in this study.

As in previous studies, participants were told that they would receive cash payment for their participation in a word game task ranging from \$3-10. Again, all participants were offered the minimum (\$3) from the experimenter with no feedback on their performance. The control condition provided no cue (as in Study 1). In the treatment condition, we provided a cue to negotiate.

Method

Participants. A total of 67 individuals (33 males, 34 females) participated in exchange for cash payment between \$3-10. Participants' ages ranged from 18-46 with a mean of 21 years.

Procedure. All procedures and measures matched those in the previous study, with additional instructions necessary for the manipulation. The experimental manipulation consisted of two variations of written instructions given to participants just after they finished the boggle task. In the *control* condition, instructions were identical to those given in study 1 following the boggle task, which read: *You have now completed 4 rounds of boggle and will be compensated between \$3-10. Please indicate to the experimenter that you are finished, so that they can score your rounds. Then you will be paid.* Thus the control condition instructions gave no indication that negotiation was an option (nor did it explicitly state that it was *not* an option).

The *payment negotiable cue* condition consisted of the following statement: *The exact payment is negotiable.* Thus this cue directly informed participants that negotiation was a viable option. Upon finishing the boggle task, a written announcement was placed in front of the participant to read while waiting for the experimenter, who was scoring their rounds. The notice thanked them for participation and repeated the manipulated instructions above about the nature of payment determination. The experimenter left the participant alone for 3 minutes, so each participant had sufficient time to review this message, to ponder their own entitlement, and to possibly consider negotiation strategies.

Experimenters. As in previous studies, two hypothesis-blind experimenters (one male and one female) each conducted the study on approximately half of the sample. For this study, we took utmost efforts to control for experimenter effects: acting students from a reputable drama program were hired and trained to play the role of the experimenters. The two

experimenters, despite different genders, were similar in appearance (height, weight, and attractiveness). They adhered to the same scripts for offering payment to all participants.

Results and Discussion

Across the 2 conditions, 22% of participants asked for more money. Of the participants who interacted with a male experimenter, 27% asked for more, whereas 19% of those who interacted with the female experimenter asked for more ($\chi^2 = .57$, n.s.).

Gender differences. Of the male participants, 36% asked for more money, whereas only 9% of female participants asked for more ($\chi^2 = 7.3$, $p = .01$). To test the hypothesis that gender differences would depend on the situational cues, we regressed a dichotomous dependent variable assigned a 1 if the participant asked for more money and 0 if they did not ask on two independent variables: a) gender and b) a dummy variable for the payment negotiable cue. In a logistic regression, main effects for gender ($\beta = -1.97$, $p < .01$) and the cue dummy ($\beta = -2.3$, $p < .01$) were both significantly different from zero. People were indeed more likely to negotiate following the stronger cue. The interaction between gender and condition was non-significant ($\beta = -17.29$, n.s.). As can be seen from Figure 1, the gender difference in initiating negotiation is in the *payment negotiable cue* condition remained quite large.

As in the previous study, there were no gender differences in perception of boggle performance, $t(52) = -1.54$, $p = .13$. Males slightly outplayed females this time (Average words among males=9.4; Average words among females=7.0), $t(57)$, $p = .06$. However controlling for average words did not eliminate the effects of gender ($\beta = -2.41$, $p = .01$). Although actual boggle performance was uncorrelated with asking ($r = .006$, n.s.), perceived performance was correlated with asking in this study ($r = .32$, $p < .05$)

This study replicated the gender differences in the initiation of a negotiation found in the prior study. As predicted, providing cues about the negotiability of payment did indeed increase the rates of asking. However, direct cues about the negotiability of payment did not eliminate gender differences – gender differences were larger in the *payment negotiable cue* condition than in the control conditions. In fact gender differences persisted in the payment condition with 59% of males negotiating for a higher payment and only 17 % of females negotiating for a higher payment.

In sum, the majority of females did not negotiate, even when told explicitly that payment was negotiable. This raises the question of why asking rates were so low among females (relative to males) in the *negotiate cue* condition where negotiating was explicitly suggested to them. One possibility is that females reacted with discomfort and/or anxiety to the prospect of initiating negotiation (Babcock, et al., 2004; Gelfand, et al., 2004), which prohibited them from behaving in their own interest by negotiating for more money. We further explored this issue in the following study.

Study 3

The purpose of Study 3 was to explore males and females' perceptions and feelings about the prospect of negotiating. Based on our results from Study 2, we reasoned that even when information exists about the viability of negotiating for greater payment, females might still opt out due to the affective and social costs associated with the prospect.

To the extent that “negotiation” is associated with competition, it may be particularly anxiety provoking for females. Furthermore, research has shown that females have less confidence in their ability to perform competitive tasks than males (Lenney, 1977; McCarty, 1986). Stevens, Bavetta, & Gist (1993) found that females have lower self-efficacy about their

negotiation ability as compared to males. More recently, research has shown that females associate negotiation with competition and male-traits (Kray, et al., 2001). Therefore, the term “negotiation” may have negative connotations for females.

An empirical question is whether the term “ask” carries the same negative connotations for females. Research on “framing effects” has found that judgments and decisions are sensitive to varying descriptions of a prospect (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). For instance, framing a risk in terms of gains vs. losses (e.g., a 90% chance of survival versus a 10% chance of death) should rationally speaking not affect choices. However, people are more risk averse when a prospect is described as a gain than when an identical prospect is described as a loss. Framing effects can occur because different descriptions may be associated with quite different construals and feelings (McFarland & Miller, 1994). For example, Liberman, Samuels, & Ross (2004) found that players were much more likely to defect in a Prisoner’s Dilemma-type game when the experiment was described to players as the “Wall Street Game” as opposed to the “Community Game,” even though the pay-off matrices were identical. Thus context of the choice (cooperate or defect) influenced participants’ construal of the situation and their subsequent behavior.

Framing the initiation of negotiation in a different way could alter behavior as well. If the frame change has no effect, then the prospect of *asking* for something for oneself would be just as inhibitive for females as the prospect of negotiating, since arguably, the two frames describe the same behavior. However, for females, the prospect of asking might provoke a less inhibitory response than the prospect of negotiating, since the meaning of the cue is far less strongly associated with competitive/male behavior. To test this, we first explored gender differences in perceptions and feelings about the two frames in Study 3. In study 4, we examined behavioral effects resulting from the two frames.

Method

Participants. A total of 108 individuals (62 males, 46 females) completed a short survey as part of a series of surveys, for which they received course credit. Participants' ages ranged from 18-34 with a mean of 19 years.

Procedure. Each participant received one of two versions of a short survey. Half of the participants (randomly assigned) were instructed: "We are interested in your thoughts and feelings about negotiating for things for yourself." The other half was instructed: "We are interested in your thoughts and feelings about asking for things for yourself." Participants then rated the degree to which they expected negotiating [asking] for things to be: Easy/Difficult, Friendly/Hostile, Stressful/Relaxed, Non-threatening/Scary, Agonizing/Fun, Overbearing/Reasonable. Each of these word pairs possesses a straightforward valence interpretation: one endpoint is positive and the opposite is negative. Each pair of antonyms were presented as opposite ends of a 7-point Likert Scale with 'Extremely' denoted at each end point, followed by 'quite' at points 2 and 6, then 'slightly' at points 3 and 5, and 'neither' at the midpoint. Half of the word pairs were presented with the positive word at point 1 and half were presented with the positive word at point 7. A factor analysis produced a single factor that accounted for 51.50% percent of the variance ($\alpha = .812$). All items had factor loadings above .60.

Similarly we asked them to rate the degree to which they expected negotiating [asking] for things to be: Cooperative/Non-Cooperative, Competitive/Non-Competitive. These pairs were analyzed separately since there was no straightforward valence interpretation.

Demographic measures. After completing the matching differentials task, participants were asked to self-report their age, gender, and highest degree achieved.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses. After reverse-scoring the necessary items, we created an average aversiveness score across all valenced word pairs with higher numbers reflecting greater aversion to the prospect. Across all participants, the average score for thoughts about “asking for things” was 3.18, compared to 3.98 for thoughts about “negotiating for things,” $t(106) = -4.61, p < .001$. Across all participants, negotiating was viewed as more competitive, $t(106) = -3.48, p < .001$, and asking was viewed as more cooperative, $t(106) = 3.69, p < .001$.

Gender Differences. In order to compare the effects of the word primes across male and female participants, we conducted an ANOVA with both gender and the word prime (a dummy variable for ask versus negotiate) as independent variables and average aversiveness as the dependent variable. The results revealed no main effect of gender, $F(1, 104) = 2.37, p = .13$, a significant main effect of word prime, $F(1, 104) = 28.75, p < .001$) and a significant interaction between gender and word prime, $F(1, 104) = 9.28, p < .01$, see Table 1. Males only somewhat differentiated between negotiating and asking (3.85 versus 3.46, $p < .08$), yet consistent with our expectations, females considered negotiating to be a great deal more aversive than asking (4.01 versus 2.76, $p < .001$).²

This study demonstrates that males and females react differently to the prospects of “asking” and “negotiating.” These results suggest that the provision of external cues about the negotiability of the situation may affect females and males differently, depending on the nature of the cue. Results from Study 2 demonstrate that cues to negotiate have a stronger effect on males than females. If the prospect of “asking” is much less agonizing for females than the prospect of negotiating, then cues to “ask” might be more effective at increasing rates of initiating a negotiation for females. We tested this prediction in Study 4.

Study 4

In this experiment, we returned to the paradigm used in Study 1 and Study 2 in which participants could ask for and receive greater cash payment for their participation in a word game task, after being offered the minimum (\$3 on a range of \$3-10). However, this study consisted of three conditions: 1) control, 2) negotiating cue, and 3) asking cue. Study 3 provided suggestive evidence that males and females have different perceptions and feelings about engaging in each of these two behaviors. In the current study we examined the behavioral consequences of these differing perceptions and feelings. Specifically, we tested the prediction that cueing to *ask* will increase rates of the initiation of a negotiation for more money among females, thereby reducing the gender gap.

Method

Participants. A total of 153 individuals (81 males, 72 females) participated in exchange for cash payment between \$3-10. Participants' ages ranged from 18-56 with a mean of 22 years.

Procedure. All procedures and measures matched those in Study 1 and 2. Two new hypotheses-blind experimenters (one male and one female) who, as before, closely matched each other on appearance. Experimenters wore similar outfits (white t-shirts and blue jeans) in order to control for experimenter effects as much as possible. As in Study 2, the experimental manipulation consisted of providing distinct cues regarding the viability of initiating a negotiation with the experimenter for more money. Since the rate of initiating a negotiation with the experimenter remained relatively low even with the cue to negotiate in Study 2, we added an additional sentence to the two treatment conditions, informing participants that many participants negotiate/ask for higher payment. We reasoned that this social comparison information would likely boost rates of asking for more compensation.

The first condition was a control condition, which replicated the exact instructions in Studies 1 and 2 (no cue). In the second condition, participants read a *negotiating cue*:

You and will be compensated between \$3-10. The exact payment is not fixed, and you can negotiate for more if you want. Many participants negotiate for a higher payment.

In the third condition, participants read an *asking cue*:

You will be compensated between \$3-10. The exact payment is not fixed, and you can ask for more if you want. Many participants ask for a higher payment.

As in Study 1 and Study 2, the dependent variable was whether or not participants initiated a negotiation with the experimenter for greater compensation.

Results and Discussion

Across the 3 conditions, 51.6% of participants asked for more money. Of the participants who interacted with a male experimenter, 52.9% asked for more, whereas 49.4 % of those who interacted with the female experimenter asked for more ($\chi^2 = .08$, n.s.).

Gender differences. To test the hypothesis that gender differences would depend on the situational cues, we first conducted Chi-square tests comparing males and females within each experimental condition. Males asked significantly more frequently than females in the *control* condition ($\chi^2 = 4.31$, $p=.05$) and more in the *negotiate cue* condition ($\chi^2 = 3.91$, $p= .06$) replicating our previous findings. Yet cuing to *ask* completely eliminated the gender effect ($\chi^2 = 0.09$, $p= n.s.$). Figure 2 displays the proportion of participants who asked by gender and experimental condition.

Second, we regressed a dichotomous dependant variable assigned a 1 if the participant asked for more money and 0 if they did not ask on two independent variables: a) gender and b) dummy variables for the two types of cues (negotiate, ask). A logistic regression revealed a

modest main effect for gender ($\beta=2.04, p < .06$), and significant main effects for the cue dummies ($\beta= 4.1, p < .01$ and $\beta= 3.4, p < .01$). Consistent with the hypothesis that cueing to ask reduces the gender gap, the interaction term for the dummy variable representing *asking cue* is marginally significant ($\beta= -2.22, p = .08$), whereas the interaction term for the dummy variable representing *negotiating cue* is not ($\beta=-.74$). This pattern of interactions is consistent with the hypothesis that cueing to *ask* reduces the gender gap in asking.

Males and females performed equivalently in the game (Average words among males=12; Average words among females=12, $t(151), n.s.$). Controlling for average words does not alter the beta values or test statistics. Perceived and actual boggle performance were both uncorrelated with asking.

In sum, gender differences in the initiation of negotiation appear to depend on the frame of a cue to ask for greater compensation. That is, cueing to negotiate boosted rates of initiating a negotiation among males and females, but the gender gap persisted. However, cueing to ask, rather than to negotiate, enabled females to act in a manner contrary to the typical pattern. Thus, introducing a new framing of the behavior was empowering to females and sufficient to eliminate the gender gap in the initiation of negotiation.

General Discussion

In this paper, we demonstrate the existence of an important gender difference in negotiation behavior. By testing who initiates a negotiation and when, we address a notable gap in the negotiation literature. We contend that the initiation of negotiation warrants consideration because bargaining opportunities fail to transpire if unrecognized and if individuals do not initiate negotiations. If females are disproportionately unlikely to initiate negotiations, then gender inequities will inevitably persist.

In Study 1, 23% of males initiated a negotiation with the experimenter, while only 3% of females did so, despite a lack of gender differences in actual or perceived performance in the game. In Study 2, cueing participants about the negotiability of compensation also had an effect. We found a main effect of gender (females initiate less than males), a main effect of cueing to negotiate, but no interaction between gender and the cue to negotiate. Thus, cueing negotiation to females did increase their rates of initiating a negotiation, but the gender gap remained significant.

In Study 3, we examined the notion that females would find “asking” less aversive than “negotiating.” Indeed, females had a significantly more negative view of “negotiating” for things than of “asking” things, whereas males appeared to see asking as somewhat more aversive than negotiating. Thus the prospect of “negotiating” may inhibit women from initiating negotiation more so than, the differently framed prospect of “asking.” Finally, we tested the implications of these perceptual and affective differences on initiating behavior in Study 4, utilizing the paradigm of Studies 1 and 2. Here, we varied the description of “negotiability” in the cues by telling some participants they may “negotiate” for a higher payment and others that they may “ask.” As predicted, we found that the effect of gender interacts with cues – gender effects are present when cued to “negotiate”, but disappear when cued to “ask.”

This research makes a number of contributions to the literature. First, we broaden the current focus in negotiation theory and research from looking at what happens at the negotiation table to *who* gets to the table in the first place. In this respect, we begin to build theory regarding a neglected area of negotiation research and at the same time, help to bridge the gap between the practical reality of everyday negotiations and how they are studied in the laboratory. To be sure, our paradigm is only one way to examine propensity to initiate negotiations. Future research

should now develop new methodologies that use different tasks to complement this task that can further develop this as an area of scientific inquiry. As Gigerenzer (1991) has reminded us, often it is with the development of scientific tools – such as new negotiation tasks in this context – that we start to build new theories regarding psychological phenomena. To date, the dominant tool (e.g., the 5 issue bargaining task) has limited the science of negotiation to rather strongly prescribed negotiation situations and our results offer an alternative tool to begin looking at different questions.

Second, this paper also makes a contribution to the psychology of gender in negotiation. Although we find main effects of gender on propensity to negotiate, we also explored a more fine-grained contextual analysis of gender and negotiation by examining how subtle framing can affect gender differences in negotiation. We expand upon research in cognitive psychology (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1984) and research in the cognitive tradition in negotiation (e.g., Neale & Bazerman, 1991), by showing that framing affects *initiating negotiations*, and furthermore, that framing effects vary by gender. We illustrated that females associated the framing of negotiation with much more negative connotative meaning than the framing of asking (Study 3). As a result, framing the situation in terms of *asking* eliminated the gender differences. Interestingly, males appeared to think asking was somewhat more aversive than negotiating, and although males initiated a negotiation *less* following a cue to ask, this difference was not significant ($p = .2$) Speculatively though, males could perceive asking for things to be unmanly by demonstrating weakness and low power. Future research should explore this issue.

From a theoretical point of view, our results illustrate that the term negotiation is not gender neutral. Given that much of the negotiation research in the laboratory is framed with this term, it will be important to now explore gender and bargaining behavior when given different

frames. Indeed, perhaps one reason that there are inconsistencies in gender effects across studies is that there were differences in how simulations were framed and interpreted by males and females. From a practical point of view, our results are also instructive: It could be more productive to focus on training females to re-label negotiation situations in order to reduce gender differences, rather than strictly focus on how to help females to better negotiate. As our research has shown, this terms is laden with considerable negative perceptual baggage for females and thus, training that ignores this reality is likely to ultimately be ineffective.

Limitations and Future Directions

These studies are not without limitations. As with other laboratory research, caution must be taken in generalizing the findings to other samples and settings. At the same time, our paradigm was developed to reflect real world elements of ambiguous negotiation situations, and our results are consistent with our theory and previous field-based results. Nevertheless, future research that utilizes other methods (e.g., diaries, experiential sampling) would help to further triangulate on these results.

One might worry that the task itself was somehow gendered in a particular way that led to results that might not appear in a different sort of task. Our extensive pilot testing found that males and females found boggle to be equally enjoyable, interesting, and motivating. Thus, it seems unlikely that results were specific to the task, however future research should utilize additional tasks to triangulate on these findings.

Another concern that arises in the lab is experimental demand. It is possible that the increase in initiating a negotiation in the presence of cues occurred because the information in the cue informed participants of the “correct” or “expected” way to behave. However, the

complex interactions we found between gender and the cues suggest that demand is not a sufficient explanation.

While this paper focused on how different situational cues and frames affected males and females propensity to initiate a negotiation, our future research will explore what drives differential perceptions of negotiability among males and females, in the absence of cues. We expect that power plays an important role. Since males, as a group, enjoy greater power, they should be more prone to attend to rewards and means of reward attainment and less sensitive to social threat and punishment than females (Keltner, et al., 2003). Perceiving a situation to be negotiable and negotiating for a better outcome for oneself are clearly characteristic of a high power state. Thus, priming females to feel powerful may be one way to increase their propensity to initiate negotiations in the absence of cues to negotiate.

There are several other possible contextual factors that might moderate the gender differences we found. For example, we would expect that 1) the extent to which individuals are negotiating or asking for themselves versus others and 2) the nature of the resource being negotiated might attenuate or exacerbate gender differences; and 3) the larger organizational climate and culture. While these research questions go beyond the scope of the current paper, we are now conducting research on these variables to broaden the theory and capture the phenomenon of initiating negotiations in its situational complexity.

In conclusion, this paper broadens existing negotiation theory and research by moving beyond what happens when people negotiate at the table by focusing on an important necessary condition: That individuals have gotten to the table in the first place. Our results show support that there is gender variation in this phenomenon, and has important theoretical and practical importance for the advancement of females.

Footnotes

¹ Only nine participants directly asked. Gender differences are robust when including responses that could be considered as an indirect request for more money (i.e., a complaint).

² We conducted similar ANOVA with competitive/non-competitive and with cooperative non-cooperative as dependent variables in lieu of the average aversiveness score. Females perceived the prospect as more competitive but no more or less cooperative than males. There was no main effect of word prime, nor were there interactions between gender and word prime on perceptions of either competitiveness or cooperativeness.

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Table 1. Mean responses in matching differential task on a 7-point scale, with antonym words (e.g., easy/difficult) at each scale endpoint.

Table 1a. Valenced word pairs

		Easy/ Difficult	Friendly/ Hostile	Relaxed/ Stressful	Non-threatening/ Scary	Fun/ Agonizing	Reasonable/ Overbearing	Average Score
<i>Ask</i>	<i>Male</i>	3.56	2.97	3.65	3.29	3.82	3.47	3.46
	<i>Female</i>	2.63	2.32	3.16	2.67	3.05	2.37	2.76
<i>Negotiate</i>	<i>Male</i>	3.82	3.75	4.54	4.00	3.54	3.46	3.85
	<i>Female</i>	4.07	3.48	4.59	4.22	4.44	3.81	4.01

Table 1b. Non-valenced word pairs

		Competitive/ Non-competitive	Cooperative/ Non-cooperative
<i>Ask</i>	<i>Male</i>	3.91	2.88
	<i>Female</i>	3.16	2.84
<i>Negotiate</i>	<i>Male</i>	3.00	3.93
	<i>Female</i>	2.30	3.59

Figure 1. Percentages of males and females who asked for greater compensation in Study 2.

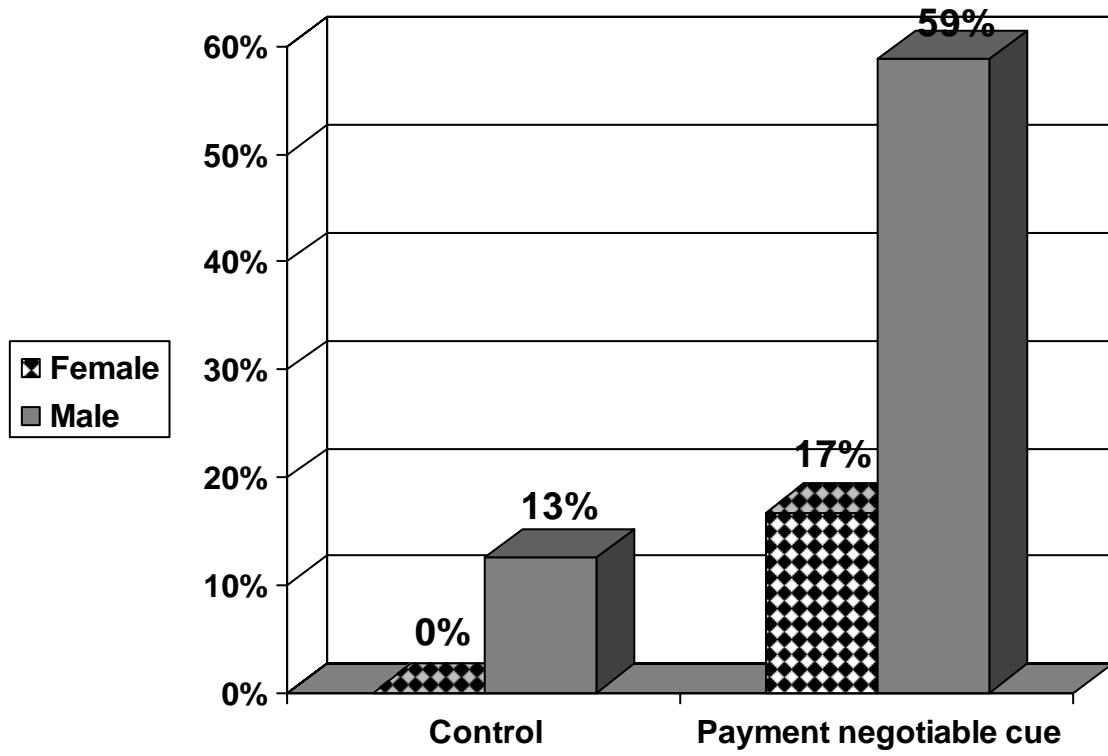


Figure 2. Percentage of participants who asked for greater compensation in Study 4.

