



Reports

Male pragmatism in negotiators' ethical reasoning

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ABSTRACT

Across four studies, we explored why a gender gap emerges in negotiator ethics, such that men set lower ethical standards than women. The male pragmatism hypothesis suggests men, more than women, are motivationally biased in setting ethical standards. Experiment 1 demonstrated how negotiations' masculinity implications underlie this gender gap in ethics. Experiment 2 demonstrated that, by viewing ethics from a self-interested perspective, men were more egocentric in their ethical reasoning than women. Experiment 3 demonstrated that, by granting themselves more leniency in ethics than others, men exhibited more moral hypocrisy than women. Experiment 4 examined how implicit negotiation beliefs affect the relation between gender and ethical standards. As hypothesized, fixed beliefs predicted lower ethical standards, particularly for men. These findings suggest a robust pattern by which men are more pragmatic in their ethical reasoning at the bargaining table than women.

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Introduction

Bernie Madoff is infamous for luring myriad investors into doomed business deals under false pretenses. Yet, if Bernie had been born Bernadette, would similarly egregious ethical lapses have occurred? Since Gilligan's (1982) seminal work on moral development, differences have been noted in how men and women distinguish right from wrong. Though evidence that men and women have categorically distinct moral orientations is tenuous (Jaffey & Hyde, 2000), women appear to have higher ethical standards than men in business contexts (Franke, Crown, & Spake, 1997). In strategic interactions, men are more accepting of ethically questionable tactics (Lewicki & Robinson, 1998; Robinson, Lewicki, & Donahue, 2000) and engage in more deception than women (Dreber & Johannesson, 2008). The prevalence of economically devastating business scandals involving male protagonists raises the question of what drives men's ethical reasoning.

To understand this gender gap in ethics, we explore its cognitive-motivational underpinnings. We hypothesized that men are more pragmatic in their ethical reasoning than women. Ethical pragmatism involves judging ethicality on the basis of practical consequences and whether decision makers' goals are achieved (James, 1896), and is evidenced by responsiveness to situational cues. People are generally motivated to interpret ambiguous information beneficially and to seek information supporting self-interested conclusions (Fiske, 2004; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Kunda, 1990; Lord, Ross, & Lepper,

1979). Yet, when it comes to morality, males are more morally disengaged than females (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). In other words, males more readily justify moral misconduct by minimizing its consequences or otherwise excusing it. In addition, males adjust their moral orientation on the basis of situational characteristics, like protagonist sex, more so than females (Bussey & Maughan, 1982). Each of these findings implies men, more than women, are ethically pragmatic.

We expected male pragmatism to be particularly strong in situations with masculinity implications. In the current research, we examined male pragmatism in negotiations, a stereotypically masculine task involving competition over scarce resources (Kray & Thompson, 2005). Though some negotiations also include cooperative elements (Thompson, 1990), we expected male pragmatism to be triggered by negotiations' omnipresent competitive element. Male negotiators engage in more competitive behaviors (Walters, Stuhlmacher, & Meyer, 1998) and secure more resources (Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999) than female negotiators, suggesting that men are acutely motivated to win, even if doing so requires compromising their ethics.

Though competition motivates unethical behavior (Shleifer, 2004; Rick & Loewenstein, 2008), it does not explain why men are expected to be more ethically pragmatic than women. To make this case, we draw on the literature illustrating men's greater responsiveness to situational threats to masculinity (in comparison to women's reaction to threats to their femininity). Arguing that manhood is precarious because it requires continuous demonstration, Vandello, Cohen, Burnaford, and Weaver (2008) found that false feedback indicating gender-atypical performance was more threatening to men compared to women. When manhood was threatened, men became more aggressive; when womanhood was threatened, no change

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occurred in women's aggressiveness. Similarly, men overcompensate in the face of masculinity threats (i.e. become more anti-gay and pro-war) in a way that women do not when their femininity is threatened (Willer, Rogalin, Conlon, & Wojnowicz, 2012). Finally, men's competitiveness in strategic interactions varies on the basis of their motivation to win (i.e. to beat intergroup rivals) in a way that women's competitiveness does not (Van Vugt, De Cremer, & Janssen, 2007). Taken together, men's competitive behavior, more so than women's, appears to be motivated by situational threats to their masculinity. When men feel like they have something to prove or defend against, they become more aggressive and competitive.

We extend this line of reasoning to suggest that negotiation performance has identity implications for men that motivates ethical pragmatism. Rather than manipulating masculinity threat, as in prior research, we reasoned that masculinity implications are chronically embedded in zero-sum (i.e. win-lose) tasks such as negotiations, which motivates unethical behavior. Whereas the work cited above examined physical aggression, attitude extremity, and competitive moves as a function of masculinity threat, the current research examined the prevalence of self-serving ethicality judgments, arguably a form of non-physical aggression against competitors.

The current work begins by examining how masculinity implications drive males' lower ethical standards in negotiations. We expected the masculinity implications inherent in negotiations to motivate lower ethical standards and male pragmatism, which we explored in three ways. First, we explored whether male negotiators are particularly prone to egocentric interpretations of ethically ambiguous situations. We expected male negotiators' ethical reasoning to depend on their identification with negotiating parties in ethical dilemmas more so than female negotiators'. Second, we explored whether male negotiators demonstrate more moral hypocrisy than female negotiators. Males were expected to judge the appropriateness of a morally ambiguous act as more favorable when committed by the self than by others. Third, we explored whether certain men are particularly vulnerable to ethical lapses. Specifically, we examined whether implicit negotiation beliefs, which speak to whether good negotiators are born versus created, influence the relationship between gender and ethical reasoning. We expected beliefs that negotiating ability is fixed, and therefore can only be demonstrated and not developed, would exacerbate the masculinity implications of the task and thereby reduce ethical standards for men.

We make several important and novel contributions to the literature. Whereas previous research has mainly documented gender main effects on ethics in negotiations, the current research develops a theoretical framework for understanding the intersection of gender and ethics. By demonstrating stronger motivational biases for men than women, we address the question of why gender differences emerge in negotiators' ethical reasoning. For the first time, we demonstrate that males' ethical compromises are driven by the masculinity implications embedded in the task. We then explore ethical reasoning through the lens of male pragmatism, a motivated responsiveness to situational cues. Finally, we identify implicit negotiation beliefs as a key element of this relationship between masculinity and ethical reasoning.

Experiment 1

The current study was designed to test whether male negotiators' relatively low ethical standards are driven by the masculinity implications embedded in the task. Though past research has shown that both males and females associate masculine gender stereotypes with negotiations (Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001), we expected that males would be particularly sensitive to the implications of this gendered context for masculinity. The current research examined for the first time whether a gender difference exists in the degree to which negotiations are perceived to have masculinity implications

and, if so, whether it accounts for men's relatively low ethical standards. We hypothesized that men's lower ethical standards would be mediated by their heightened perception that negotiations are masculine tasks.

Methods

Participants

115 undergraduate business students (55 male) earned partial course credit.

Procedure

Participants evaluated a scenario from an ethical advice column in *The New York Times Magazine* (Cohen, 2004). The scenario read:

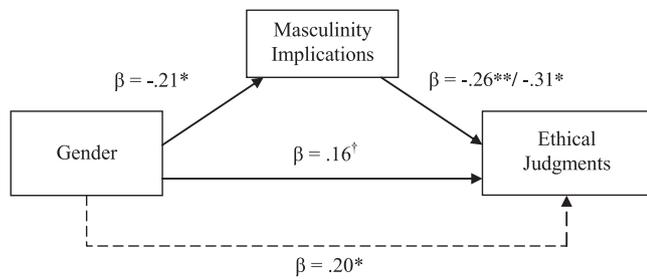
I have an opportunity to buy the property of my dreams. The problem is that the elderly couple who have lived there for more than 40 years love the house and assume that I will maintain it. I intend to tear it down and build a more modern house on this beautiful property. If I reveal my plan, they may refuse to sell me the house and the land. Am I ethically bound to tell?

Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed that the seller was ethically bound to tell. After several filler items, participants indicated their agreement with a 4-item masculinity implications scale ($\alpha = .69$): "Negotiations are part of a man's world", "Negotiating is not very feminine", "The most effective negotiators are male", and "Negotiators require masculine strength to prevail." Response scales ranged from 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely).

Results and discussion

We first confirmed the relationship between gender and ethical judgments. Consistent with previous research, males ($M = 5.74$, $sd = 2.37$) had more lenient ethical standards than did females ($M = 6.60$, $sd = 1.77$), $F(1, 113) = 4.86$, $p = .029$. In other words, males were more permissive than females in evaluating the act of not revealing pertinent information. We next tested our prediction that males, more than females, would perceive masculinity implications in negotiations. As expected, males ($M = 3.99$, $sd = 1.54$) perceived greater masculinity implications than did females ($M = 3.36$, $sd = 1.47$), $F(1, 113) = 5.00$, $p = .027$. Finally, we conducted analyses testing the mediating role of masculinity implications on the relationship between gender and ethical judgments (Baron & Kenny, 1986). When ethical judgments were simultaneously regressed on gender and masculinity implications, the effect of masculinity implications was significant ($b = -.31$, $SE = .13$, $t(112) = -2.45$, $p = .016$) while the effect of gender was rendered marginally significant, $b = .66$, $SE = .39$, $t(112) = 1.70$, $p = .09$ (see Fig. 1). To test the significance of this mediation, we conducted bias-corrected bootstrapping analyses with 5000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of gender, Mediated effect = .20, $SE = .13$, 95% $CI = .01-.55$. As the confidence interval does not bridge zero, this analysis supports our conclusion that perceived masculinity implications mediated the relationship between gender and ethical judgments.

The current study demonstrated two gender differences relevant to negotiator ethics. First, males indicated lower ethical standards than females. Second, this difference was driven by the perception that negotiations have masculinity implications. Males' sensitivity to the masculinity implications of negotiations lowered their ethical standards. We expected this implicit connection between masculinity and negotiations to provide the impetus for male pragmatism, which we examined in the remaining experiments.



Notes: † = $p < .10$; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$. Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female.

Standardized coefficients are presented.

Fig. 1. Experiment 1: mediation analysis. Note: coefficients are standardized β s. Numbers to the right of the slash represent the standardized β in the simultaneous regression analysis. Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female.

Experiment 2

Since [Hastorf and Cantril's \(1954\)](#) seminal study of divergent recollections of a football game among rival spectators, egocentrism's role in shaping social perception has been apparent. Dartmouth students seemed to have witnessed a different game than Harvard students. Recollections of key plays and perceptions of sportsmanship were biased in a direction favoring each student body's own team.

Just like students' identification with their teams produced biased judgments, identifying with a particular negotiator can produce egocentrism. For example, identification with negotiators in a lawsuit influences beliefs about a fair settlement ([Babcock, Loewenstein, Issacharoff, & Camerer, 1995](#)). Similarly, egocentrism impacts ethicality judgments in negotiations. [Kronzon and Darley \(1999\)](#) showed that taking the perspective of either a perpetrator or victim biased evaluations of an ethically ambiguous action. Observers who identified with a party who had misrepresented their position to secure concessions from their counterpart regarded this action as more morally acceptable than observers who identified with the counterparty.

Myriad research speaks to egocentrism's powerful role in bargaining. While there is little evidence of overall gender differences in egocentrism ([Gjerde, Block, & Block, 1986](#)), we expected the negotiation context itself, where competition is fundamental and masculinity implications abound, would trigger this motivational bias for males more so than females.

Method

Participants

210 full-time MBA students (124 male) at an East Coast university participated as part of a classroom exercise.

Procedure

Participants evaluated the identical scenario from Experiment 1. The scenario was introduced to provide fodder for future class discussion. Rather than rate the ethicality of the situation, participants were asked to "provide your own advice to the buyer" in an open-ended paragraph. Responses were not graded.

Negotiator identification manipulation

Prior to evaluating the scenario, participants completed Bullard Houses ([Karp, Gold, & Tan, 1998](#)), a negotiation simulation involving a real estate transaction between buyer's agents and seller's agents. Buyer's agents were informed of their client's intention to develop the property into a high-rise commercial hotel. Seller's agents were

told that their client would like to see the property used for "tasteful," non-commercial purposes. Thus the buyer's intentions were inconsistent with the seller's interests. The simulation posed an ethical dilemma to buyers' agents by prohibiting them from revealing their client's intentions to the seller's agent under any circumstances (cf. [Kern & Chugh, 2009](#)).

As in past research ([Babcock et al., 1995](#); [Kronzon & Darley, 1999](#)), participants' roles (buyer agent, seller agent) served as the manipulation of negotiator identification. Both buyers' agents in the simulation and buyers in the ethical scenario faced a similar ethical dilemma, with strong incentives to misrepresent their intentions.

Ethical reasoning

Two judges coded participant responses for ethicality. Consistent with the newspaper columnist's advice (e.g., "By deliberately withholding facts the seller regards as paramount, you are practicing tacit deceit, and there's nothing ethical about that."), unconditionally advising the buyer to reveal the intended use of the property was deemed the ethical response. Responses coded as ethical included: "I think you are ethically bound to tell. By withholding information or lying outright, you are preventing the seller from making an educated decision about the transaction." Responses coded as unethical included: "No you are not. A rule of real estate is 'never fall in love with bricks and mortar'. The couple will move on and find a new home and lifestyle." Participants who equivocated in their response (i.e. "it depends") were coded as unethical ($n = 82$). Eighteen participants failed to answer the question posed in the scenario; these responses were dropped from further analysis. Inter-rater agreement for the remaining 192 participants was adequate ($\kappa = .92$). Disagreements were resolved through discussion. Word length of responses ($M = 55.35$, $sd = 38.87$) was unrelated to gender, negotiator role and ethicality judgments (all $p > .44$).

Results and discussion

We examined whether gender and negotiator role impacted ethical reasoning with a hierarchical log-linear analysis (see [Table 1](#)). Replicating Experiment 1, females set higher ethical standards than males, $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 5.37$, $p = .02$. Second, negotiator role affected ethicality judgments such that seller's agent were more likely to make the ethical recommendation, $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 5.46$, $p = .02$. Consistent with the male pragmatism hypothesis, these main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between gender and negotiator role, $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 4.25$, $p = .04$. Men in the buyer role were significantly less likely to recommend the buyer's intentions be revealed than men in the seller role, $\chi^2(1, N = 113) = 9.40$, $p = .002$; in contrast, women's advice to the buyer was not significantly predicted

Table 1
Experiment 2: ethical responses by gender and negotiator role identification.

		Buyer	Seller	Overall
Male	Ethical	17.31%	44.26%	31.86%
	Unethical	30.77%	11.48%	20.35%
	Equivocal	51.92% ($n = 52$)	44.26% ($n = 61$)	47.79%
Female	Ethical	46.51%	47.22%	46.84%
	Unethical	20.93%	13.89%	17.72%
	Equivocal	32.56% ($n = 43$)	38.89% ($n = 36$)	35.44%
Overall	Ethical	30.53%	45.36%	
	Unethical	26.32%	12.37%	
	Equivocal	43.16%	42.27%	

Note: Responses to the question "Am I ethically bound to tell?" were categorized as Ethical ("Yes"), Unethical ("No") and Equivocal ("It depends"). Analyses in the text compare Ethical responses to the other two categories combined.

by their role, $\chi^2(1, N=79) = .004, p = .95$.¹ Alternatively, male buyers were significantly less likely than female buyers to recommend the ethical course of action ($\chi^2(1, N=95) = 9.47, p = .002$), while male and female sellers did not differ in their advice, $\chi^2(1, N=97) = .08, p = .78$.

Once again, men were significantly more lenient in their ethical reasoning than women. More importantly for testing the male pragmatism hypothesis was the significant interaction between gender and negotiator identification. Men were relatively egocentric in their ethical reasoning, with those who identified with the buyer being significantly less likely to recommend that the buyer's intentions be revealed than those who identified with the seller. In contrast, women's ethical reasoning was unaffected by their identification with negotiating parties.

Experiment 3

Experiment 2 provided support for the male pragmatism hypothesis, with men demonstrating more egocentrism in their ethical reasoning than women. Next we examined another motivational bias in ethical reasoning: moral hypocrisy. Moral hypocrisy has been defined both as a discrepancy between what people say is moral and what they do (Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997) and a discrepancy between how people set ethical standards for themselves versus others (Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010). In the current experiment, we examined the latter type of moral hypocrisy. The male pragmatism hypothesis predicts that men, more than women, will set more lenient ethical standards for themselves than others. To test this hypothesis, we examined how men's evaluation of the moral appropriateness of negotiator deception changes depending on who commits the deception: oneself versus someone else.

Method

Participants and design

216 undergraduate students (115 male) at a Midwestern university participated as part of a classroom exercise. As in Lammers et al. (2010), we manipulated negotiator target, with participants randomly assigned to either a *self-transgression* condition ($n = 109$) or an *other-transgression* condition ($n = 107$).

Materials and procedure

Participants evaluated the following scenario from Kern and Chugh (2009):

You are trying to sell your stereo to raise money for an upcoming trip overseas. The stereo works great, and an audiophile friend tells you that if he were in the market for stereo equipment (which he isn't), he'd give you \$500 for it. A few days later, the first potential buyer comes to see the stereo. The buyer looks it over and asks a few questions about how it works. You assure the buyer that the stereo works well. When asked how much, you tell the buyer that you already had an offer for \$500. The buyer buys the stereo for \$550.

We manipulated negotiator target by asking participants to either imagine that they themselves lied (*self-transgression* condition) or,

by changing the grammar accordingly, that a classmate lied (*other-transgression* condition).

Ethical reasoning

After reading the scenario, participants evaluated the moral appropriateness of the seller's behavior and whether this was an acceptable negotiation tactic ($\alpha = .76$). Response scales ranged from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly).

Results and discussion

We examined whether gender and negotiator target impacted ethicality judgments with ANOVA. Two main effects emerged. First, males ($M = 5.47, sd = 1.33$) viewed the deceit as significantly more ethical than did females ($M = 4.96, sd = 1.42$), $F(1, 212) = 8.07, p = .005$. Second, participants in the *self-transgression* condition ($M = 5.45, sd = 1.44$) viewed the action as more ethical than did those in the *other-transgression* condition ($M = 5.00, sd = 1.32$), $F(1, 212) = 5.64, p = .02$. However, these main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between gender and target (see Fig. 2), $F(1, 212) = 3.89, p < .05$.

Next we analyzed the pattern for males and females separately. Consistent with the male pragmatism hypothesis, males in the *self-transgression* condition viewed the deception as significantly more ethical than did males in the *other-transgression* condition ($M_s = 5.88$ vs. $5.08, sds = 1.21$ and 1.33), $F(1, 113) = 11.29, p = .001$. In contrast, women's ethicality judgments were unaffected by negotiator target ($M_s = 4.99$ vs. $4.92, sds = 1.52$ and 1.31), $F(1, 99) = .07, ns$. Alternatively, males rated the deception as significantly more ethical than did females in the *self-transgression* condition ($F[1, 107] = 11.32, p = .001$), while ethical reasoning did not differ by gender in the *other-transgression* condition, $F(1, 105) = .39, ns$.

The results are consistent with the male pragmatism hypothesis. Men viewed negotiator deception to be more ethical when they did it than when a third party did so. In contrast, women's ethicality judgments were not significantly affected by who did the lying. In combination with men's egocentrism demonstrated in Experiment 2, the moral hypocrisy evident here suggests male negotiators are relatively pragmatic in their ethical reasoning.

Experiment 4

We have argued that male pragmatism arises in part from the chronic masculinity implications of negotiations. Just as men seeking to demonstrate and restore their masculinity behave aggressively (Vandello et al., 2008), pressure to demonstrate negotiating prowess, and thereby prove one's masculinity, may reduce men's ethical standards. The current study explored the relationship between negotiator gender and individual differences in the motivation to prove

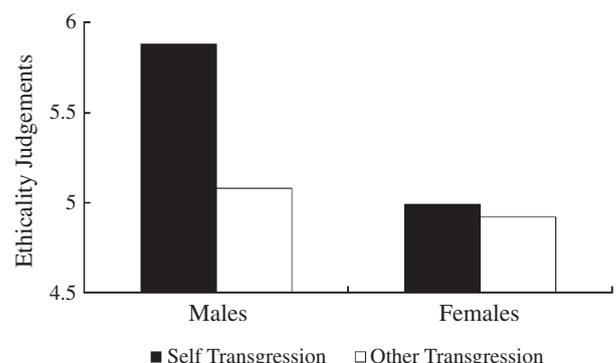


Fig. 2. Experiment 3: ethicality judgments by gender and negotiator target condition.

¹ We also analyzed the data after removing participants who equivocated in their response. The Gender x Negotiator Role interaction was marginally significant, $\chi^2(1, N=110) = 2.99, p = .08$. Within gender, the effect for men was significant, $\chi^2(1, N=59) = 11.41, p = .001$; the effect for women was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N=51) = .43, p = .51$.

oneself on the setting of ethical standards. If pressure to demonstrate masculinity underlies the gender gap in negotiator ethics, then dispositional tendencies to prove oneself should predict more lenient ethical standards for male negotiators.

To examine individual differences in the motivation to prove oneself, we measured implicit negotiation beliefs (INBs) (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2007). Dweck and Leggett (1988) first distinguished between fixed beliefs (suggesting ability is unchangeable) versus malleable beliefs (suggesting effort predicts success). Starting with Elliott and Dweck (1988), the body of research on implicit beliefs has clearly shown that fixed beliefs promote the goal of *demonstrating* competency (i.e. proving oneself) whereas malleable beliefs promote the goal of *developing* competency (i.e. growing oneself) (Dweck, 1991, 1996; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Extending this work into the negotiation arena, Kray and Haselhuhn (2007) observed that negotiators with fixed beliefs more strongly preferred negotiation tasks that made it easier to prove themselves (by ensuring success) than negotiators with malleable beliefs. Proving oneself is a top priority for fixed belief holders.

If lenient ethical standards provide negotiators with greater flexibility in meeting their performance goals (i.e. proving themselves), then negotiators with fixed beliefs, for whom performing is central, should set lower ethical standards than negotiators with malleable beliefs. The male pragmatism hypothesis predicts this tendency to be particularly pronounced for males. We reasoned that, in addition to creating generalized performance pressure for male and female negotiators alike, fixed negotiation beliefs might also burden males with masculinity implications. Fixed beliefs imply that individuals either do or do not possess a given quality. Because masculinity is precarious (Vandello et al., 2008), men with fixed beliefs should be particularly concerned with proving their masculinity. To be clear, though fixed beliefs may heighten concerns about proving oneself generally for men and women alike, precarious manhood suggests that male negotiators with fixed beliefs have their gender identity “on the line” to a greater degree than either male negotiators with malleable beliefs or female negotiators in general.

We expected men’s INBs, more so than women’s, to predict their ethical standards. On one hand, if men have more fixed views than women, then INBs may mediate the relationship between gender and ethics. However, an absence of gender differences in Kray and Haselhuhn’s (2007) prior work and in implicit theories research more generally places doubt on this hypothesis. While fixed beliefs create performance pressure, this relationship is not likely bidirectional, with performance pressure creating fixed beliefs. The antecedents of implicit theories are multifaceted (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Instead, because the male pragmatism hypothesis predicts greater responsiveness by men to contextual factors, we predicted a moderated relationship such that INBs and gender interact in setting ethical standards. We expected men with fixed beliefs to set lower ethical standards than men with malleable beliefs; in contrast, women’s ethical standards were not expected to vary on the basis of their INBs.

Pretest

Before testing our main hypothesis, we confirmed that fixed beliefs exacerbate the perceived masculinity implications of negotiations. To do so, we examined the correlation between INBs and masculinity implications with an M Turk sample ($n = 56$), using Kray and Haselhuhn’s (2007) measure of INBs, with higher values indicating more malleable beliefs, and the identical measure of masculinity implications ($\alpha = .82$) described in Study 1. As expected, INBs were negatively related to the belief that negotiations have masculinity implications, $r(56) = -.35, p = .008$. This relationship was highly significant for males, $r(30) = -.51, p < .001$; it was not statistically significant for females, $r(26) = -.16, ns$. Fixed negotiation beliefs predicted greater perceived masculinity implications, particularly for males.

Method

Participants

411 MBA and undergraduate business students (218 male) were recruited from large East Coast ($n = 299$) and West Coast universities ($n = 121$). Some participants (69%, $n = 284$) did so as a classroom exercise; the remainder ($n = 127$) participated for \$10. In the analyses below, we control for both participant location and payment type.

Materials and procedure

We measured participants’ INBs prior to completing the Self-reported Inappropriate Negotiation Strategies (SINS) scale (Robinson et al., 2000), which gauges the perceived appropriateness of ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics. East Coast participants completed both scales as part of a single survey, with a filler task in between. West Coast participants completed the INB scale and then rated the appropriateness of negotiation tactics eight weeks later. Responses were anonymous for paid participants. Participants who completed the scales as part of a class exercise were told that the purpose of the scales was to provide fodder for class discussion, and that their individual responses would not be shared with the class.

Implicit negotiation beliefs

We administered Kray and Haselhuhn’s (2007) INB scale ($\alpha = .77$). This 7-item scale measures beliefs about the malleability of negotiator characteristics. Sample items include “good negotiators are born that way” and “all people can change even their most basic negotiator characteristics.” The response scale ranged from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate more malleable beliefs.

Ethical standards

SINS scale involves rating the appropriateness of 16 negotiation tactics ($\alpha = .88$). The scale includes 5 subscales: 1) traditional competitive bargaining (e.g., Make an opening demand far greater than what you really hope to settle for); 2) attacking opponent’s network (e.g., Attempt to get your opponent fired so that a new person will take his/her place); 3) false promises (e.g., In return for concessions from your opponent now, offer to make future concessions which you know you will not follow through on); 4) misrepresentation (e.g., Intentionally misrepresent information to your opponent in order to strengthen your negotiating arguments); and 5) inappropriate information gathering (e.g., Gain information about an opponent’s negotiating position by paying others to get this information for you). The response scale ranged from 1 (*not at all appropriate*) to 7 (*very appropriate*).

Results and discussion

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics. Notably, men and women did not statistically differ in their implicit negotiation beliefs ($F [1, 409] = 1.60, p = .21$), thus ruling out the mediation hypothesis. To test the moderation hypothesis, we conducted a hierarchical regression including our control variables, gender, INBs, and ethical standards (see Table 3). Three statistically significant effects emerged. Once again, males demonstrated lower ethical standards than females, $\beta = .16, B = .31, SE = 0.09, t = 3.34, p = .001$. Second, fixed beliefs predicted lower ethical standards than malleable beliefs, $\beta = -.14, B = -.02, SE = 0.01, t = -2.66, p = .008$. Finally, consistent with the male pragmatism hypothesis, a significant INB X Gender interaction emerged, $\beta = -.81, B = -.04, SE = 0.02, t = -2.50, p = .01$. To understand the significant interaction, we conducted separate regressions for males and females. As depicted in Fig. 3, INBs predicted SINS responses for males ($\beta = -.24, B = -.04, SE = 0.01, t = -3.44$,

Table 2

Experiment 4: means, standard deviations and correlations between variables for males and females.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Males</i>									
1. INBs	35.85	5.34	–						
2. Overall SINS	3.27	0.92	–.27	–					
3. Traditional bargaining	5.39	1.29	–.09	.50	–				
4. Attacking network	2.45	1.18	–.27	.78	.22	–			
5. False promises	2.36	1.23	–.32	.73	.04	.57	–		
6. Misrepresentation	2.98	1.17	–.19	.85	.34	.57	.58	–	
7. Information gathering	3.28	1.45	–.14	.78	.24	.55	.48	.54	–
<i>Females</i>									
1. INBs	35.17	5.54	–						
2. Overall SINS	2.99	0.96	–.01	–					
3. Traditional bargaining	5.13	1.49	.15	.62	–				
4. Attacking network	2.10	1.07	–.08	.76	.27	–			
5. False promises	2.06	1.03	–.09	.72	.17	.61	–		
6. Misrepresentation	3.01	1.20	–.02	.85	.44	.58	.62	–	
7. Information gathering	2.74	1.35	.01	.80	.38	.65	.54	.55	–

Note: Significant correlations ($p < .05$) are in boldface.

$p < .001$),² but not females, $\beta = -.04$, $B = -.006$, $SE = 0.01$, $t = -0.47$, *ns*.

Consistent with past research, men were more lenient in their ethical standards than women. We also showed for the first time that, for male negotiators, fixed negotiation beliefs predicted lower ethical standards than malleable beliefs. By enhancing performance pressure, fixed beliefs fostered ethical leniency at the bargaining table. Finally, we observed that INBs moderated, rather than mediated, the relationship between gender and ethical standards. An absence of a mean gender difference in INBs ruled out the mediation hypothesis. Instead, we found evidence for INBs playing a moderating role. Whereas men's ethicality judgments fluctuated on the basis of their INBs, women's ethical judgments were insensitive to whether they held fixed versus malleable beliefs about negotiations. This pattern is consistent with the male pragmatism hypothesis, which predicts responsiveness to contextual factors in how ethics is approached by male negotiators burdened with the masculinity implications of their performance. When under pressure to prove themselves, men, but not women, became more lenient in their ethical standards.

General discussion

Across four experiments, the male pragmatism hypothesis was supported. As expected, men were more lenient in their judgments of ethically ambiguous negotiating tactics than women. In addition, for the first time, we provided evidence to suggest men's ethical leniency is driven in part by the masculinity implications embedded in negotiations (Experiment 1). We then showed negotiations trigger male pragmatism, producing egocentrism (Experiment 2) and moral hypocrisy (Experiment 3) in how men set ethical standards. By both manipulating identification with negotiating parties (Experiment 2) and whether the target of an ethically ambiguous action was the self versus another person (Experiment 3), a robust pattern emerged whereby men adopted a pragmatic approach to ethical reasoning. Finally, Experiment 4 explored a moderator of the relationship

² We also analyzed the effects of men's INBs (controlling for participant location and incentive) on each of the five subscales of the SINS instrument. Although men's INBs did not predict ethical standards related to inappropriate information gathering ($\beta = -.09$, $B = -.03$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -1.29$, $p = .20$), negative relationships emerged between men's INBs and judgments of traditional competitive bargaining tactics ($\beta = -.13$, $B = -.03$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -1.87$, $p = .06$), attacking an opponent's network ($\beta = -.22$, $B = -.05$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -3.22$, $p = .001$), making false promises ($\beta = -.26$, $B = -.06$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -3.85$, $p < .001$) and misrepresenting information ($\beta = -.19$, $B = -.04$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -2.64$, $p = .009$). Women's INBs were not related to ethical judgments along any of the five subscales (all $p > .30$).

Table 3

Experiment 4: hierarchical regression results for ethical standards as a function of gender and implicit negotiation beliefs (INBs).

Variables	Dependent variable: overall acceptability of unethical tactics		
	Model 1: base model	Model 2: full main effect model	Model 3: full model with interaction
Step 1: control variables			
Participant location (0 = East coast, 1 = West coast)	–.39^a (.11)	–.39^a (.11)	–.37^a (.11)
Participant incentive (0 = Paid, 1 = Unpaid)	.16 (.11)	.20 ^b (.11)	.19 ^b (.11)
Step 2: main effects			
Gender (0 = Female, 1 = Male)		.31^a (.09)	1.79^a (.60)
INBs		–.02^a (.01)	–.002 (.01)
Step 3: interaction			
Gender × INBs			–.04^c (.02)
Overall model R ²	.03	.07	.08
Adjusted R ²	.02	.06	.07
Change in R ²		.04	.01
F statistic for change		9.02^a	6.24^c
Overall F statistic	5.82^a	7.53^a	7.35^a

Values shown are the unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. $N = 411$.

Two-tailed tests.

^a $p \leq .01$.

^b $p \leq .10$.

^c $p \leq .05$.

between gender and ethical reasoning: implicit beliefs about whether negotiating ability is fixed versus malleable. In addition to showing for the first time that fixed INBs predict lower ethical negotiating standards, we also showed that this tendency was particularly true for men. In other words, fixed beliefs about the masculine negotiation domain, which elevate masculinity implications, left men particularly vulnerable to ethical lapses.

We observed several manifestations of male pragmatism in negotiations. First, men's ethicality judgments were influenced by their identification with negotiators in a way that women's judgments were not. Men who had just faced an ethical dilemma about whether to disclose information about their client's intended use of a property were less likely to conclude that information disclosure was ethically required than men who had been in the position of wanting this type of information from their counterpart. Second, men viewed falsifying the existence of a competing offer to be more morally justifiable when they committed the act than when someone else did. In the final study, we examined a wide range of ethically questionable negotiating tactics, including making false promises and misrepresenting relevant information. Across multiple contexts, men demonstrated a consistent pragmatism to their ethical reasoning. Remarkably, women's ethical reasoning was unaffected by motivational biases.

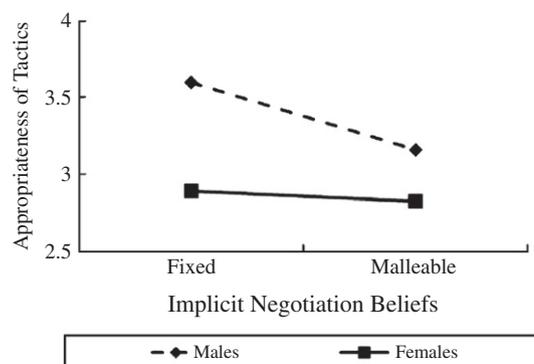


Fig. 3. Experiment 4: appropriateness of SINS tactics by gender and implicit negotiation beliefs. Actual means are reported.

An interesting question to consider is whether the observed gender differences are proxies for a more fundamental psychological construct. If high power individuals engage in more moral hypocrisy than low power individuals (Lammers et al., 2010), it raises the question of whether differences in how men and women experience power underlie our findings. Bowles and Gelfand (2009) recently observed moral leniency for individuals possessing status characteristics that were both achieved (i.e. role) and ascribed (i.e. gender), which suggests gender effects in ethical reasoning may be driven by power and status differences between the sexes. Future research that further disentangles power and status from gender is a worthwhile pursuit. At the same time, studying gender effects in their own right is vital because doing so sheds light on how status and power naturally play out.

This research contributes to our understanding of implicit negotiation beliefs. Kray and Haselhuhn (2007) demonstrated the perils of fixed negotiation beliefs across multiple performance measures, including competitive value claiming and cooperative value creation. Fixed beliefs also predicted worse performance (i.e. grades) in a graduate-level negotiation course. The current work shows yet another cost of fixed beliefs: heightened vulnerability to ethical lapses. For the first time we showed that fixed views of ability, which promote goals to prove oneself, led to more leniency in ethical judgments than malleable beliefs. Presumably, lying was motivated by the expectation that it would make “proving oneself” easier by gaining favorable agreement terms. Though deception may improve negotiators’ short-term economic payoffs (O’Connor & Carnevale, 1997), it can also negatively impact negotiators’ relationships and subjective experiences (Kray, Kennedy, & Van Zant, 2012). Understanding the conditions under which fixed beliefs improve or impair both economic and relational performance is an important direction for future research.

Another interesting question concerns the generalizability of the current results. First, we consider that business students cheat more than their non-business peers (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006), suggesting gender differences in ethical reasoning would diminish beyond the business context. By reinforcing a self-interest perspective (Frank, Gilovich, & Regan, 1993), business education may give license to motivational biases in ethical reasoning. Second, we consider whether these results would generalize beyond negotiations. We have argued that the competitive nature of negotiations, with their chronic masculinity threats, is an important determinant of male pragmatism. As such, we would expect any competitive context with masculinity implications to trigger male ethical pragmatism. For example, perhaps males would view cheating in a math competition (but not a writing competition) to be more morally acceptable than females. Finally, we consider whether stereotypically feminine domains involving feminine forms of deception would trigger female pragmatism. Given that females tell more “white lies” meant to protect an interaction partner’s feelings than males (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996), we might expect that females’ relational goals and implicit relationship theories (cf. Kammrath & Dweck, 2007), would predict this form of unethical conduct in a way that men’s relational goals and theories would not. On the other hand, womanhood need not be proven to the same degree as manhood (Vandello et al., 2008), so threats to femininity may not trigger pragmatism in females. Clearly, future research is needed to understand the boundary conditions of the effects reported here.

We began by asking whether a hypothetical Bernadette Madoff would have committed equally unethical acts as the real Bernie. The current research suggests not and, importantly, offers an underlying explanation. Though men and women may share common motives and implicit beliefs, they differ in the extent to which their motives and beliefs are called upon to set ethical standards in business contexts. Men’s ethical reasoning appears to be more motivationally biased, particularly for men who have fixed beliefs about the bargaining table. As a result, male negotiators derive considerable leeway in setting ethical standards, rendering them more vulnerable to ethical lapses.

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