

Gender Differences in Negotiation: Considering the Usual Driving Forces

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Abstract : Negotiation is a specific form of interaction based on communication in which the parties enter into deliberately, each with clear but different interests or goals and a mutual dependency towards a decision due to be taken at the end of the confrontation. Consequently, negotiation is a complex activity involving many different disciplines from the strategic aspects and the decision making process to the evaluation of alternatives or outcomes and the exchange of information. While gender differences can be considered as one of the most researched topic within negotiation studies, empirical works and theory present many conflicting evidences and results about the role of gender in the process or the outcome. Furthermore, little interest has been shown over gender differences in the definition of what is negotiation, its essence or fundamental elements. Or, as differences exist in practices, it might be essential to study if the starting point of these discrepancies does not come from different considerations about what is negotiation and what will encourage the participants in their strategic decisions. Some recent and promising experiments made with diverse groups show that male and female participants in a common and shared situation barely consider the same way the concepts of power, trust or stakes which are largely considered as the usual driving forces of any negotiation. Furthermore, results from Human Resource self-assessment tests display and confirm considerable differences between individuals regarding essential behavioral dimensions like capacity to improvise and to achieve, aptitude to conciliate or to compete and orientation towards power and group domination which are also part of negotiation skills. Our intention in this paper is to confront these dimensions with negotiation's usual driving forces in order to build up new paths for further research.

Keywords : negotiation, gender, trust, power, stakes, strategies

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