"Whatever you do, just don't let him notice you're a woman!" General beliefs on women's gender ideology as a function of topic in mixed-gender negotiations

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*H*ow one approaches gender differences in general likely influences the way one handles mixed-gender negotiations. In the present paper, we examine general beliefs on how women negotiators do—as opposed to how they "should"—handle gender in order to increase their chances of success. First, we hypothesised that people's general beliefs would support a *sexblindness* ideology according to which gender is, and indeed should be, ignored in order to succeed. Second, because negotiation comes across as a stereotypically masculine activity, we predicted that prescriptions regarding what women *should do to succeed* would commonly favour *assimilationism* (the belief that women need to assimilate to male norms) over *sexawareness* (the belief that gender differences should be acknowledged and celebrated). We nevertheless predicted a general belief that women might stay away from these prescriptions and rely more on their gender (i.e. endorse *sexawareness* over *assimilationism*) within feminine as compared to masculine and neutral-topic negotiations. Together, our two experiments confirm these predictions. We discuss our results in terms of the consequences on women's gender ideology-based strategies, a potentially relevant aspect to their actual negotiating outcomes.

Keywords: Gender ideology; Negotiation; Topic; Women.

Gender[1] plays an important role in negotiations. Although research in the last two decades has evidenced the impact of situational factors (Demoulin, 2014; Kennedy & Kray, 2015) and the relatively small performance gap between women and men (Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999), gender influences all phases of negotiations (Babcock et al., 2006; Kimmel et al., 1980). Research efforts have so far concentrated on revealing and examining the various determinants of gender effects in negotiation or on finding ways to overcome them. Meanwhile, we know less about people's beliefs on how women handle gender differences in mixed-gender negotiations and on the perceived effectiveness of the different strategies that women may mobilise in such contexts. Do people believe

that women acknowledge or ignore gender in negotiations? Moreover, are women expected to acknowledge (their) gender more on stereotypically feminine (i.e. gender-congruent) topics, and if so, is this strategy considered likely to benefit women negotiators? In the present paper, we assess general beliefs on how women do, as well as how they should, handle gender to make the best of mixed-gender negotiations as a function of the negotiating topic. In line with role congruity theory and with recent findings in the negotiation field, we propose that, in contrast to what people would actually recommend, they expect women to handle gender differently when bargaining about gender-congruent (vs. incongruent) topics.

[1]Following past work on gender in negotiation, we use the concept of gender effects across the manuscript to refer to the differences among male and female negotiators. To be sure, we could also talk of sex effects here, since we approach these differences in the biological meaning of this dichotomy, and not the socially constructed concepts corresponding to masculinity and femininity.

Gender in negotiations

For decades, negotiations emerged as a male prerogative (Kray & Thompson, 2005). Recently, researchers acknowledged that this apparent lack-of-fit for women negotiators is more a question of situational variables than the consequence of poor negotiation abilities. Indeed, some circumstances affect women negotiators differently than men. For instance, feminine negotiation topics (in comparison to masculine ones) increase women's willingness to initiate negotiations (Bear, 2011) as well as their negotiation's fate (Bear & Babcock, 2012; but see Demoulin & Teixeira, 2016). Researchers explain this pattern by the stronger role congruity that women perceive in feminine contexts (Eagly & Karau, 2002), leading them to become both more willing and more able to conduct negotiations in their favour. That is, consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men, i.e., their gender roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002) affect the way people handle gender in negotiations. As the saying goes, "knowledge is power", and the feeling of power positively influences women's negotiating performances (Hong & van der Wijst, 2013). As such, a gender-congruent topic—that is a topic on which women stereotypically hold more expertise than men—should prove important in determining how women approach (their) gender in negotiations.

The best way to handle gender in negotiations is however not obvious for women. Whereas women face the threat of being stereotyped or even patronised when acknowledging their femininity (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Glick & Fiske, 1996), they risk backlash when they break gender norms by acting as men (Bowles et al., 2007; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013). This double bind proves particularly relevant in negotiations, where women and men's interests are overtly opposite. A clearer insight on how people believe women handle gender in negotiations as well as on the consequences of the adopted strategies at the bargaining table is obviously important.

Handling gender in mixed-gender interactions

The topic of how to handle gender in mixed-gender interactions has only recently caught scholars' interest. As a first empirical step, Koenig and Richeson (2010) distinguished between sexblindness and sexawareness. According to sexblindness, one should treat women and men as specific individuals and eliminate or ignore all references to gender categories. In sharp contrast, sexawareness proposes that one should acknowledge and celebrate sex differences for the mutual enrichment of both genders. One's ideological endorsement is obviously not without consequences. For instance, sexblindness increases women's confidence at work and, hence, the actions they

undertake (Martin & Phillips, 2017). In contrast to these positive effects, downplaying gender may in fact not benefit women collectively, but act as a factor that maintains the status quo (Malicke, 2013).

The fact that both downplaying and celebrating gender differences can lead to various, and indeed quite different, interpretations and implementations may account for such inconsistent findings. In their fourfold framework, Hahn et al. (2015) argue that there is not only a positive but also a negative manner to acknowledge or ignore gender, making for four different gender ideologies. The positive pole of gender downplaying, sexblindness, is the gender ideology according to which all persons possess unique features and should be treated as individuals regardless of gender. The negative gender downplaying, assimilationism, equally states that one should ignore gender but takes men as the evaluation standard whereas women need to assimilate to male norms and behaviours to enhance their effectiveness. The two ideologies in favour of gender acknowledgement also differ fundamentally. The positively valenced sexawareness argues that both women and men hold equal, albeit different, qualities that should all be taken as assets for mutual enrichment. Finally, the negatively valenced segregationism considers the differences between genders insurmountable and claims that women and men should perform gender-congruent activities.

Some research has already investigated factors affecting ideological endorsement. Context, gender, nationality, personal values and organisational norms were all found relevant (Banchefsky & Park, 2018; Bourguignon et al., 2015; Hahn et al., 2015; Koenig & Richeson, 2010; Martin et al., 2018). For instance, confirming the role of context, people prefer sexblindness at work and sexawareness in social settings (Koenig & Richeson, 2010). Similarly, Sarlet et al. (2012) observed that while women ask for protective paternalistic behaviours (i.e. sexawareness) from men in romantic relationships, they regard these same behaviours as sexist at work, where they expect more egalitarian (i.e. sexblind) treatments. Since professional environments have represented the primary focus for gender equality advocates, people's preference for gender downplaying at work seems self-evident.

Although past work offers some insight on how people think one should handle gender in mixed-gender interactions, we know less about how women are to approach gender in negotiations. Moreover, the way that these ideologies translate into concrete gender-handling strategies and the general beliefs on their appropriateness and efficiency are yet to be explored.

Gender-handling strategies in negotiations

Negotiations offer a particularly interesting research field for gender-handling strategies. Indeed, the stereotype of a good negotiator is very similar to that of men (i.e. rational,

assertive, self-centred, Kray, Thompson, Galinsky, 2002). Consequently, women face a double bind when searching for the right balance between agentic (i.e. male) prescribed behaviours in negotiations, and their own communal gender-role prescriptions.

To understand better women's response to this challenge, the present paper assesses general beliefs on how women handle gender within mixed-gender negotiations pertaining to gender-congruent versus incongruent topics. We also examine how efficient different gender handling-strategies are believed to be in enhancing women's actual chances of success. Indeed, beliefs fundamentally affect dyadic negotiations (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2007). That is, one's negotiating fate is determined by a network of interrelated identities, beliefs and emotions (Freshman, 2005). One's basic assumptions about oneself and one's world create the conceptual framework that influences which goals are salient and important (see Dweck, 1996; Dweck & Leggett, 1988), thus significantly altering everyday interactions. Moreover, people's (often unconscious) scripts on what constitutes appropriate negotiating behaviours are particularly important for women, the implicit "outsiders" in the male-valenced field of negotiations (Raiffa, 1982). Better understanding how women are expected and recommended to respond to this challenge is thus of key importance.

Since interacting with the other party is mandatory in negotiations, it makes sense that not all four ideologies apply (Hahn et al., 2015). Indeed, segregationism entails keeping genders apart from one another and can thus not represent a valid negotiating choice. With this in mind, we only considered sexblind, sexaware and assimilationist strategies in our studies.

Because current societal norms emphasise more than ever egalitarian and undifferentiated treatments of both genders (European Commission, 2019), we first hypothesised a general belief that, regardless of the topic, women negotiators would and should rely on sexblind strategies more than on sexaware and assimilationist ones in order to succeed (Hypothesis 1). Indeed, current societal concerns for gender equality translate in norms explicitly stating that gender should not affect one's professional fate. This preference for sexblindness at work (Koenig & Richeson, 2010) should emerge even more in the context of work *negotiations*. That is, the bargaining field offers the particularity of involving counterparts that start of from opposite points to work their way towards common ground. As such, people need to ensure that the bargaining process is handled in the best (i.e. most undiscriminating) possible conditions. The importance of avoiding potential misunderstandings and negative developments during this process is obvious. Because gender discrimination is a salient topic on nowadays society agenda, and the workplace represents the main field for gender equality advocates, negotiators should clearly avoid all

reference to their counterpart's gender/gender particularities and approach them as unique individuals instead. Said otherwise, given the higher stakes of negotiations as compared to most other interactions, people should be even more careful to avoid potential discrimination claims, and opt for sexblind more than for assimilationist or sexaware strategies during the bargaining process (Hypothesis 1).

Although we would not expect the topic to affect the overall predicted and recommended support for sexblindness, a different pattern should emerge for women's second choice of ideology (i.e. sexawareness or assimilationism). Because the stereotypes characterising a good negotiator largely overlap with those characterising men (Kray et al., 2001), we hypothesised that the endorsement of assimilationism, according to which women (should) adopt male norms and behaviours, would prevail over sexawareness. That is, people often perceive the social group of men as the norm when the two genders are compared, a golden standard that implicitly affects women in a negative way (see the "to be explained effect", Bruckmüller et al., 2012; Miller et al., 1991). This bias is particularly strong in negotiations and one would thus both expect and recommend women to avoid attracting attention to their presumed lower expertise on gender-incongruent issues, by instead displaying a behaviour indicating that they too can resemble men when necessary. Assimilationism should therefore emerge as both the expected, and recommended approach for women in gender-incongruent negotiations (Hypothesis 2). Moreover, given negotiation's overall male connotation (Kray & Thompson, 2005), there is no reason to assume that a neutral topic would elicit a different choice of gender ideology-based strategy. Consequently, the pattern should equally extend to neutral topics, with assimilationism again emerging in people's beliefs as both more likely and better suited to address women's needs than sexawareness.

A feminine topic should however provide an occasion to adopt a more nuanced perspective on these general beliefs. More specifically, as mentioned above, success in negotiations is commonly attributed to a more manly approach of the bargaining process (Kray et al., 2002), implicitly suggesting assimilationism as the right way to go in order to stand a better chance of success. As such, people's *recommendations* on how women should handle gender to win *feminine* negotiations should replicate the pattern already described for masculine and neutral-topic ones. That is, assimilationism should be perceived as a more "adequate" manner to handle gender than sexawareness, as it provides women the right (i.e. the masculine) way to increase their negotiating chances (Hypothesis 3a). Then again, a feminine topic makes the stereotype of women particularly salient, while also offering them presumed leverage in this stereotypically considered gender-incongruent field. Consequently, people might expect women bargaining on feminine matters

to forget the importance of a manly approach and act more in line with their gender role, that is acknowledge gender, thus complying to women's communal, "normal" way of handling things in nowadays society (Eagly et al., 2019). In contrast to the above-predicted recommended approach, sexawareness should thus prevail over assimilationism as the *expected* behaviour in *feminine* negotiations (Hypothesis 3b).

EXPERIMENT 1

In Experiment 1, we manipulated the negotiation topic (feminine vs. masculine). We then assessed participant's views regarding the likelihood / the recommendation for a woman to adopt a sexblind, a sexaware, and an assimilationist approach while negotiating.

Method

Participants and design

An a priori analysis (GPower 3.1. software) using the medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.53$) reported by Bear and Babcock (2012) in their studies on the moderating effect of topic on gender differences in negotiating outcomes ($N = 116$) indicated that 204 participants would ensure 85% power for detecting a medium sized effect with a .05 significance level. We secured 218 participants (69.8% women) to accommodate for loss of participants and overestimation of effect size. Participants ranged between 18 and 96 years in age ($M_{age} = 34.3$, $SD_{age} = 12.3$). They were native English speakers (43.6% UK citizens, 41.3% Americans, 4.6% Canadians, 2.3% Irish, 0.5% Australians; 7.8% of participants did not clearly report their nationality), each receiving £0.75 for participating to the study. We used a 2 (topic: feminine vs. masculine) × 2 (viewpoint: expectations vs. recommendations) between-participants design, randomly assigning participants to one of the four experimental conditions.

All procedures involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

Procedure

We invited participants through the Prolific crowd-sourcing platform (www.prolific.ac) to participate in an intergroup relations study. Upon acceptance, they read the beginning of a story on a mixed-gender work-related negotiation. The main character, Susan, was to convince Mr Jones, the head of the cosmetics company, to hire her as an advertiser for their new, innovative, cosmetics product. For half of the participants, the negotiating contract involved make-up (a feminine topic, given its almost exclusive use by women), whereas the other half had Susan negotiating on after-shave (a product that, despite being a cosmetics, is almost exclusively used by men).

After the general introduction and the presentation of the negotiation topic, participants went through seven consecutive negotiating steps, going from Susan's self-encouraging pre-negotiation discourse, to the final point of her presentation. At each negotiation step, participants evaluated three possible strategies that Susan would (expectations condition) or should (recommendations condition) display. Said otherwise, we manipulated topic and viewpoint (i.e. the independent variables of the research) to assess participant's gender strategies for the upcoming negotiation (i.e. the dependent variable).

Each strategy reflected one of the three considered gender ideologies, that is sexblindness ($\alpha = .80$), sexawareness ($\alpha = .89$) and assimilationism ($\alpha = .82$). We conceived the items for sexblindness to avoid all gender cues by instead focusing on general matters (e.g. "Susan gave the best presentation of her life. She presented her commercial for the product in a confident way, she explained the reasons behind each of her choices, the research upon which her approach was based, she talked about the focus groups that loved her advertisement idea and were ready to go buy the product."). In contrast, sexawareness specifically focused upon the potential leverage of woman negotiators (e.g. "Susan gave the best presentation of her life. She created the magic that only a woman could create, she explained the importance of playing on the target group hopes and dreams when advertising for a product, she talked about the complexity of the real people that would use the product and about the feelings that a commercial needed to awaken in order to win people's hearts."). Assimilationism instead assessed a more manly approach of negotiations (e.g. "Susan gave the best presentation of her life, one inspired from her own hard attempts to make it in the corporate world, that had taught her that success comes from being tough and determined. It talked about the privilege of becoming the best in the field, and of the feeling one gets when they can finally stand among the greatest men society had ever seen").[2] Participants rated on a scale from 1 (=extremely unlikely) to 7 (=extremely likely) whether they believed Susan would (expectations condition) or should (recommendations condition) deploy each ideological strategy to win the negotiation. We averaged the scores for each ideology across the seven negotiation steps (see Appendix S1 for the story).

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[2]The measure was tested on 10 persons that were required to identify for each item corresponding to sexblindness, sexawareness and assimilationism the gender ideology category to which it belonged. No errors in identification emerged.

Table 1
Choices of gender ideology-based strategies as a function of topic (Experiment 1)

| Topic | Gender ideology | | | M_{C1} | M_{C2} |
	Sexawareness	Sexblindness	Assimilationism		
Feminine	4.68 (1.09)	5.79 (.782)	4.21 (1.10)	2.65 (2.19)	.453 (.894)
Masculine	4.06 (1.46)	5.91 (.735)	4.24 (1.26)	3.52 (2.87)	−.176 (1.07)

Note: Numbers in parentheses correspond to the standard deviations.

Results

We submitted participants' responses to a 2 (viewpoint: expectations vs. recommendations) × 2 (topic: feminine vs. masculine) × 3 (gender ideology: sexblindness vs. sexawareness vs. assimilationism) mixed analysis of variance with the last factor varying within participants and the remaining ones between them.[3]

The viewpoint and topic main effects were not significant, $Fs < 1.87$, *ns*. Supporting Hypothesis 1, the main effect of gender ideology was significant, $F(1.73, 369.64)^4 = 250.54$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .51$ (large effect size). To probe this main effect, we computed two orthogonal contrasts. Whereas our first contrast, C1, concerned Hypothesis 1 by comparing sexblindness (coded 2) to sexawareness and assimilationism (both coded −1), our second contrast, C2, examines Hypotheses 2 and 3 by comparing sexawareness (coded +1) to assimilationism (coded −1). The analysis revealed that C1 was significant, $t(214) = 17.84$, $p < .001$, confirming that participants preferred sexblindness over the two other ideologies (see Table 1). Surprisingly, C2 was also significant, $t(214) = 2.05$, $p = .041$, with participants endorsing sexawareness more than assimilationism.

More importantly, the gender ideology by topic interaction proved significant, $F(1.73, 369.64) = 11.19$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (relatively small effect size). To probe this interaction, we first checked whether topic moderated our two contrasts. The C1 by topic interaction was significant, $\beta = .16$, $t(214) = 2.51$, $p = .013$. Follow-up analyses revealed that C1 was significant both for the masculine ($M_{C1} = 3.52$, $SD_{C1} = 2.87$, $\beta = 3.52$, $t(214) = 14.39$, $p < .001$) and the feminine ($M_{C1} = 2.65$, $SD_{C1} = 2.19$, $\beta = 2.65$, $t(214) = 10.84$, $p < .001$) topic. In other words, participants endorsed sexblindness more than the other two gender ideologies, but this was more the case for a masculine that a feminine topic.

Second, the C2 by topic interaction also came out significant, $\beta = −.30$, $t(214) = −4.68$, $p < .001$. In line with Hypothesis 3b, follow-up analyses showed that C2 was significant for the feminine topic ($M_{C2} = .453$, $SD_{C2} = .894$, $\beta = 3.52$, $t(214) = 14.39$, $p < .001$). For the masculine topic (Hypothesis 2), the results were not statistically significant, and the means were even in the opposite direction ($M_{C2} = −.176$, $SD_{C2} = 1.07$, $\beta = −1.77$, $t(214) = −1.86$, $p = .06$). Alternatively, topic had an impact on participants' ratings of sexawareness, $F(1, 214) = 12.18$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (relatively small effect size), but not on their assimilationism and sexblindness ratings, $Fs(1, 214) < 1$, *ns*.

No other effects emerged significant. As such, the present data fully supported Hypothesis 1 and partially supported Hypotheses 2 and 3. Indeed, sexblindness emerged as the overall baseline in people's beliefs. Moreover, there was a marginal tendency towards assimilationism for the masculine topic, along with a clear preference for sexawareness for the feminine one.

Discussion

Experiment 1 confirmed our predictions on sexblindness being the baseline in work-related negotiations. Indeed, participants considered that women should and would most likely approach work negotiations in a sexblind manner. We predicted this pattern on the basis of the clear rules and regulations that stipulate the importance of a gender-free workplace in most professional environments. These results nicely extend those obtained in a general context by Koenig and Richeson (2010), confirming their validity for mixed-gender negotiations. The predicted effect of topic on gender ideology also emerged, with participants considering a feminine topic more likely to elicit sexawareness than a masculine one.

One unexpected outcome of first study relates to the absence of significant differences in women's expected and recommended approach. A potential explanation is that, although we reminded participants about the negotiating topic on several occasions, the viewpoint was only mentioned in the introduction of the story and was never reminded afterward. Consequently, many participants may have missed this rather subtle manipulation, focusing upon what Susan would do even when asked

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[3]We initially included gender as a between-participants factor in the analysis. No main effect nor interaction involving gender came out significant. We dropped gender from the analyses to simplify the presentation of results.

[4]Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse–Geisser estimates of sphericity

what she should do in order to succeed. In Experiment 2, we sought to replicate the findings on the topic effect while addressing this methodological issue.

One additional limitation relates to the absence of neutral negotiation topic. Although previous research has suggested that negotiations are by default masculine even for neutral topics (Demoulin & Teixeira, 2016; see also Kray et al., 2002), we wanted to verify that it is indeed the feminine topic that produces the ideological change.

EXPERIMENT 2

We designed Experiment 2 in order to replicate Experiment 1 while addressing some of its limitations. First, we introduced a gender-neutral topic as a third topic condition. Second, we ensured that the different viewpoints (expectations and recommendations) would remain salient during the experiment. For each step in the story, participants were asked to assess either "how likely would it be for a young woman like Susan in today's society for the story to continue as follows?" (expectations condition), or "how likely is each of the following scenarios to lead to Susan's success story in this negotiation?" (recommendations condition).

Method

Participants and design

An a priori analysis (GPower 3.1. software) using the medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.53$) reported by Bear and Babcock (2012) in their studies on the moderating effect of topic on gender differences in negotiation outcomes ($N = 116$) indicated that 240 participants would ensure 85% power for detecting a medium sized effect with a .05 significance level. We again used Prolific to secure 250 participants (70% women) to accommodate for loss of participants and overestimation of effect size. They ranged in age from 18 years to 83 years ($M_{age} = 35.9$, $SD_{age} = 12.3$). They were native English speakers taking part for the first time in our studies (mostly UK citizens – 80%, but also 16.8% Americans and 2% Irish; 1.2% of participants did not report their nationality) and received £0.85 for participating to the study. We relied on a 3 (topic: feminine vs. masculine vs. neutral) × 2 (viewpoint: expectations vs. recommendations) full factorial design. We randomly assigned participants to one of the six experimental conditions upon their accessing the Qualtrics questionnaire.

Procedure

As in Experiment 1, we manipulated the topic and the viewpoint to assess participants' gender strategy in the negotiation. Participants read about the initial stage of a work negotiation. For each of the next negotiating steps, they then rated what they believed Susan would (expectations condition) or should do (recommendations condition) to win the negotiation. Participants evaluated the same responses as in Experiment 1, that is, a sexblind ($\alpha = .84$), a sexaware ($\alpha = .88$) and an assimilationist ($\alpha = .82$) scenario. This time, however, we added a reminder at each negotiation step to ensure higher salience of the viewpoint. Moreover, we introduced a gender-neutral control topic (negotiating for a shower gel commercial) for which we expected to replicate the results of the masculine one. At the end of the study, participants also completed a manipulation check in which they had to specify the type of situation they considered while answering the previous questions, i.e., what a young woman would normally/should do when trying to land a make-up/shower gel/aftershave advertising contract.[5] All other procedural elements remained unaffected.

Results

We submitted participants' responses to a 2 (viewpoint: recommendations vs. expectations) × 3 (topic: feminine vs. masculine vs. neutral) × 3 (gender ideology: sexawareness vs. sexblindness vs. assimilationism)[6] mixed analysis of variance with the last factor varying within participants and the others between them.

The topic main effect proved significant, $F(2, 244) = 7.79$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (relatively small effect size), suggesting that ideological endorsement varied as a function of the negotiating topics. As predicted, the main effect of gender ideology was significant, $F(1.77, 432.17)[7] = 216.37, p < .001, \eta^2 = .47$ (large effect size). We again computed two orthogonal contrasts. As before, our first contrast, C1, addressed Hypothesis 1 by comparing sexblindness (coded 2) to sexawareness and assimilationism (both coded −1). Focusing on Hypothesis 2 and 3, our second contrast, C2, compared sexawareness (coded +1) to assimilationism (coded −1). The analysis revealed C1 to be significant, $t(246) = 7.89$, $p < .001$, confirming that sexblindness prevailed over the two other ideologies (see Table 2). C2 was not significant, $t(246) = .168$, $ns.$, indicating that sexawareness

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[5] A total of 109 participants failed the manipulation check. Since results did not significantly change when dropping them from the analysis, in line with recent recommendations (e.g. Aronow et al., 2019) all 250 participants remained included in the reported results.

[6] We initially included gender as a between-participants factor in the analysis. No main effect nor interaction involving gender came out significant. We therefore dropped this factor from the analyses to simplify the presentation of results.

[7] Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse–Geisser estimates of sphericity.

Table 2
Responses as a function of gender ideology, viewpoint, and topic (Experiment 2)

| | Gender ideology | | | | |
Viewpoint	Sexawareness	Sexblindness	Assimilationism	M_{C1}	M_{C2}
Expectations					
Feminine	4.95 (1.27)	5.81 (1.09)	4.47 (1.20)	2.20 (2.51)	0.47 (0.93)
Masculine	4.23 (1.27)	5.35 (.940)	4.42 (1.05)	2.04 (2.40)	−0.18 (1.14)
Neutral	4.31 (1.02)	5.57 (.791)	4.73 (.980)	2.09 (2.11)	−0.42 (1.18)
Recommendations					
Feminine	4.29 (1.39)	6.04 (.700)	4.89 (1.26)	2.89 (2.23)	−0.59 (0.74)
Masculine	3.74 (1.26)	5.87 (.825)	3.83 (1.07)	4.16 (2.94)	−0.09 (0.85)
Neutral	4.30 (1.21)	5.98 (.659)	4.53 (1.13)	3.12 (2.24)	−0.22 (1.04)

Note: Numbers in parentheses correspond to the standard deviations.
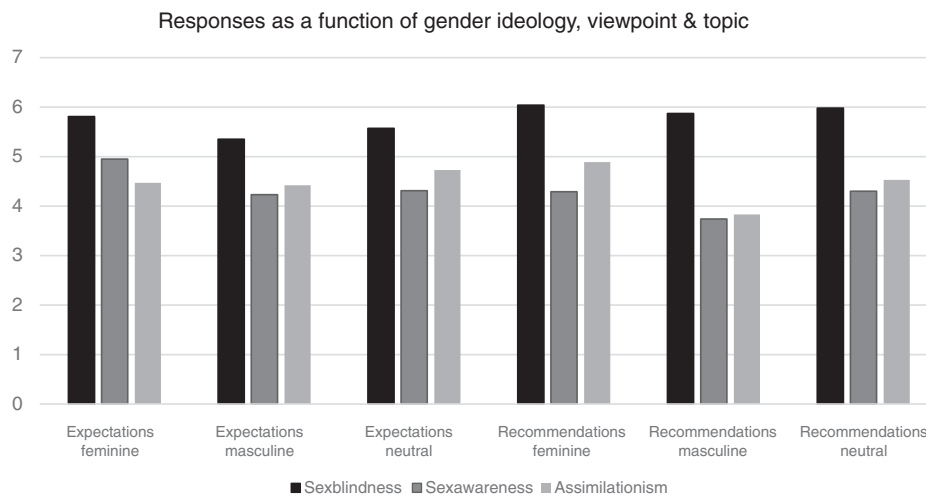
Figure 1. Responses as a function of gender ideology, viewpoint and topic (Experiment 2).

and assimilationism received an overall similar level of endorsement (Figure 1).

More importantly, the gender ideology by viewpoint interaction proved significant $F(1.77, 432.17) = 12.97$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (relatively small effect size), and was further qualified by a significant three-way interaction $F(3.54, 432.17) = 4.82$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$ (relatively small effect size). To probe this three-way interaction, we first examined the combined impact of viewpoint and topic separately for the C1 and C2 contrasts of gender ideology. That is, we looked at whether the overall support for sexblindness (C1) varied as a function of viewpoint and topic, and whether these two same variables influenced the relative endorsement of sexawareness and assimilationism (C2).

Turning to C1 first, the 2 (viewpoint: recommendations vs. expectations) × 3 (topic: feminine vs. masculine vs. neutral) only revealed the presence of a significant viewpoint effect, $F(1,244) = 17.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (small effect size), showing a preference for sexblindness over the two other ideologies.

Regarding C2, the viewpoint effect was again significant, $F(1,244) = 4.26$, $p = .040$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (small effect size) but was qualified by a significant viewpoint by topic interaction, $F(2,244) = 10.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$ (small to medium effect size). We first examined the impact of the viewpoint on C2 for each topic. No viewpoint effect emerged for the masculine and neutral topics, both Fs < 1, with assimilationism prevailing over sexawareness in both participants' expectations and recommendations (Hypothesis 2, see Table 2). In contrast, a significant viewpoint effect emerged for the feminine topic, $F(1,83) = 34.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .29$ (large effect size). Specifically, and in line with Hypothesis 3b, participants preferred sexawareness over assimilationism at the expectations level ($M_{C2} = 0.47$, $SD_{C2} = 0.93$). At the same time, supporting Hypothesis 3a, they favoured assimilationism over sexawareness when considering the recommended approach ($M_{C2} = -0.59$, $SD_{C2} = 0.74$).

Alternatively, we looked at the impact of topic for each viewpoint. Turning to expectations first, there was a significant effect of topic, $F(2,122) = 7.84$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$ (medium effect size). Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni adjustment revealed the preference for sexawareness over assimilationism to be greater for the feminine ($M_{C2} = 0.47$, $SD_{C2} = 0.93$) than for the

masculine ($M_{C2} = -0.18$, $SD_{C2} = 1.14$) or the neutral topic ($M_{C2} = -0.42$, $SD_{C2} = 1.18$), the latter two not differing from each other. For recommendations, there was also a significant topic effect, $F(2,122) = 3.48$, $p = .034$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (relatively small effect size). Post hoc comparisons revealed the preference for assimilationism over sexawareness to be greater for the feminine ($M_{C2} = -0.59$, $SD_{C2} = 0.74$) than for the masculine topic ($M_{C2} = -0.09$, $SD_{C2} = 0.85$), but not when compared to the neutral one ($M_{C2} = -0.22$, $SD_{C2} = 1.04$). Again, as predicted, no difference emerged when comparing the masculine to the neutral topic.

Discussion

Experiment 2 tested the same predictions as in Experiment 1 while increasing the salience of the two different viewpoints throughout the experiment. Furthermore, to check whether the feminine topic was the one making the difference, we included a third, *neutral*, negotiating topic for which we predicted to replicate the pattern of the masculine one (Williams & Best, 1982).

Replicating Experiment 1, and in accordance with Hypothesis 1 and past work on gender ideology (Koenig & Richeson, 2010), sexblindness emerged as the expected baseline in work-related negotiations for all negotiation topics. As we hoped, the viewpoint reminder helped further nuance these results. Indeed, the recommendations condition revealed a general belief that women would benefit from even more gender downplaying than what was expected, further highlighting the importance of sexblindness's in the negotiating process.

Moreover, and as predicted, whereas sexawareness and assimilationism were supported similarly in participant's expectations and recommendations for the masculine and the neutral topics, the feminine negotiating topic delivered a different pattern. More specifically, in line with Hypothesis 3b, participants expected that women would try to capitalise upon their gender. At the same time, and in accordance to Hypothesis 3a, they believed women would be better off behaving like a man (i.e. assimilationism) rather than acknowledging gender (i.e. sexawareness). An alternative way to describe our findings is that, as predicted, women were expected to endorse sexawareness over assimilationism more for feminine as compared to masculine and neutral topics (expectations). At the same time, assimilationism prevailed over sexawereness more when considering the most effective way for women to approach feminine, as compared to masculine negotiations (recommendations).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In two experiments, we explored people's beliefs regarding the way women would and should handle gender differences in negotiations. Based on past research (Koenig & Richeson, 2010), we hypothesised sexblindness to be the baseline in work-related negotiations, independently of topic and viewpoint (Hypothesis 1). Considering the widely held belief on negotiation's male-valence (Kray et al., 2002; Williams & Best, 1982), we also argued that people's second choice for prescriptions regarding what women should do to succeed would overall favour assimilationism over sexawareness (Hypothesis 2, for masculine and neutral topics, Hypothesis 3a for the feminine topic). Moreover, we predicted that when negotiating a feminine (i.e. gender congruent) topic, people would expect women to forget about the prevalent prescriptions in work negotiations and to display gender-enhancing strategies, i.e., sexawareness behaviours (Hypothesis 3b). Together, our two experiments confirm these predictions. Sexblindness was clearly the overall golden standard in negotiation (Hypothesis 1). Moreover, although assimilationism commonly represented the second most expected and recommended strategy for women (Hypothesis 2 and 3a), participants nevertheless expected sexawareness to prevail over assimilationism within feminine negotiations (Hypothesis 3b).

In line with past work on both gender ideology (Koenig & Richeson, 2010) and topic in negotiation (Bear, 2011), our research reveals a large effect size of gender ideology and points towards gender congruent topics as an important variable at the bargaining table. As such, our data nicely extend earlier findings on gender ideology (Koenig & Richeson, 2010) and provide useful information on the joint impact of topic and gender in negotiation (Bear, 2011; Bear & Babcock, 2012; Miles & LaSalle, 2008).

Despite these encouraging results, our studies also come with some limitations. First, participants always considered all three gender-handling strategies (sexblindness, sexawareness, and assimilationism) simultaneously. This may have made salient the fact that there are several ways for women to approach gender in negotiations and potentially affected the endorsement of each strategy. Further research should address this methodological aspect by adopting a between, rather than a within, design. Moreover, to increase participant's identification to the female character, she was introduced to them as Susan, whereas the counterpart as Mr Jones. Some participants might have perceived this differential treatment as sexist, therefore affecting their ideological endorsement and enhancing their support for sexblindness. Future studies should address this limitation by ensuring a symmetric treatment. Similarly, the lack of gender cues in the items used to operationalise sexblindness might have led participants to consider it as a more "normal" option, one that could be endorsed along with one of the other (more opposing) strategies. This caveat should be addressed in future studies. The lack of clear statistical significance when investigating Hypothesis 2 in Experiment 1 does not allow drawing definite conclusions on the gender

handling strategies used in masculine-topic negotiations. Although the obtained trend is encouraging, further investigations are required on the matter. Finally, the absence of gender effects may stem from the limited number of male participants. Further research would do well to secure a more balanced number of women and men.

We also see several other potentially rewarding research directions on gender-based negotiating strategies. It would be important, for instance, to examine the ideological choices women make in actual negotiations. Indeed, people's beliefs do not always reflect real behaviours. We should therefore refrain from considering our results as final evidence of how women (should) approach gender in negotiations. Further exploring the matter from a cross-cultural perspective should also prove fruitful. Our studies did not reveal significant cross-cultural differences in the ideological support of individuals issued from different native English-speaking countries. Future research should however replicate the experiments on other populations, to check for possible cultural differences. Indeed, as the European Institute for Gender Equality and World Economic Forum (2019) acknowledges, the idea of equal opportunities for women and men remains an objective that is still far from being reached, implicitly affecting one's approach of mixed-gender interactions. Nevertheless, countries vary in a significant manner in their efforts to support gender equality. Indeed, countries such as Sweden (83.6% gender equality score) or Denmark (77.5% score) ensure women a more equalitarian life as compared to countries such as Hungary (51.9%) or Greece (51.2%). Specifically, the UK (one of the two main countries where our studies took place) ranks 5 out of 28, with a score of 72.2% and is thus one of the most equalitarian countries on the list. Similarly, the World Economic Forum (2020) finds a significant difference between countries such as Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden, compared to less equalitarian countries such as Iraq or Yemen. In fact, both countries of origin for our participants emerge as rather equalitarian contexts as the US ranks 53 out of 149 countries included in this report whereas UK occupies a privileged 21st position. As such, given that norms are among the important determinants of people's ideological endorsement (Bourguignon et al., 2015), women's gender handling strategies in mixed-gender negotiations might vary significantly as a function of the level of gender equality in their country of origin. The support for sexblindness, for instance, might be less prevalent in less equalitarian countries. Future studies should examine if and how cross-cultural matters might affect women's gender ideologies in negotiations.

Clearly, future research may also explore the actual consequences of women's gender strategies in negotiation. As our research suggests, people believe that women should act more like men, especially in gender-congruent

negotiations. Although some research shows that women recalling past agentic (i.e. typically male) behaviour when preparing for an incongruent negotiation performed better (Bear & Babcock, 2017), at least two lines of work would disagree. First, women seem both more eager, and indeed more able, to negotiate successfully on gender-congruent topics (e.g. Bear, 2011; Bear & Babcock, 2012). This may be due to them feeling more at ease to acknowledge their femininity in such circumstances (i.e. higher sexawareness due to a lower misfit perception)? If so, then assimilationism might be the opposite of what women need.

Secondly, the literature on the backlash effect (Bowles et al., 2007; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001) similarly argues against assimilationism. Indeed, women's masculine approach is more likely to determine negative consequences than positive ones, as people commonly disapprove of a behaviour that contradicts prevalent gender norms. If this applies to negotiations, then assimilationism is unlikely to elicit higher efficiency. Then again, if assimilationism is indeed the success norm in negotiations, as our research suggests, failing to comply might equally affect women negotiators. Further research will clarify this issue.

More importantly, assimilationism might not constitute a solution to women's problem, but rather an aggravating factor by suggesting that it takes a man or, at the very least, a woman acting like a man, to succeed. This would only perpetuate the status quo and prevailing negative stereotypes on women negotiators. In this context, playing the "catch-up" game in negotiations (Kennedy & Kray, 2015) would lead to some sort of paradox, hurting women's negotiating chances even more. Unravelling these important issues is definitely an item on our research agenda.

CONCLUSION

Together, our two experiments constitute an encouraging initial step in assessing general beliefs on the gender ideology-based strategies that women (should) use to handle mixed-gender negotiations. As our data suggests, people globally believe that women do not (and should not) consider gender as important at the mixed-gender bargaining table. However, they expect different topics to trigger different ideological endorsements from women negotiators. Specifically, people expect a feminine topic (unlike a masculine one) to increase women's level of sexawareness (i.e. gender acknowledgement). Participants do not expect this change in perspective to work in women's best interest and they would rather recommend women to conform to the manly stereotype of a good negotiator (i.e. to assimilate) in order to succeed. Further investigations are of utmost importance because gender-congruent topics are known to increase women's propensity to negotiate as well as their negotiating outcomes (Bear, 2011;

Bear & Babcock, 2012). There is thus a clear need for more knowledge about women's actual mindset in such contexts.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix S1. Supporting Information

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