

Unethical choice in negotiations: A meta-analysis on gender differences and their moderators

Christoph Nohe^{a,*}, Joachim Hüffmeier^b, Paul Bürkner^c, Jens Mazei^b, Dominik Sondern^a,
Antonia Runte^a, Franziska Sieber^a, Guido Hertel^a

^a University of Münster, Organisational and Business Psychology, Fliednerstr. 21, 48149 Münster, Germany

^b TU Dortmund University, Social, Work, and Organisational Psychology, Emil-Figge-Straße 50, 44227 Dortmund, Germany

^c University of Stuttgart, Center for Simulation Science, Universitätsstraße 32, 70569 Stuttgart, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Negotiation
Unethical behavior
Gender
Meta-analysis
Bayes

ABSTRACT

Based on role congruity theory, this preregistered *meta-analysis* examines whether women negotiate less unethically than men. We predicted that moderators related to the person (negotiation experience) and the negotiation context (e.g., advocacy, cultural gender-role inequality) influence the proposed gender difference. We conducted a Bayesian three-level *meta-analysis* to test our predictions on a sample of 116 effect sizes from 70 samples (overall $N = 14,028$, including employees, MBA students, undergraduate students). As predicted, women negotiated less unethically than men (Hedges' $g = 0.25$). The gender difference held for unethical judgements (Hedges' $g = 0.29$), unethical intentions (Hedges' $g = 0.21$), and unethical behaviors (Hedges' $g = 0.17$). The gender difference decreased when parties negotiated for others as compared to for themselves, when parties strategically used positive affect, and tended to decrease when parties were experienced as compared to inexperienced negotiators. We discuss implications for theory and research.

1. Introduction

“This is my final offer” is one of the most commonly uttered phrases in negotiations. However, this statement is a lie in about 90 percent of the time (Thompson, 2014). To maximize their own outcomes, negotiators sometimes rely on unethical tactics that are “illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community” (Jones, 1991, p. 367), such as lying about alternatives or making false promises for future action (Robinson et al., 2000). Unethical negotiation behavior can destroy trust (Schweitzer et al., 2006), lead to impasses (Volkema et al., 2004), and impair relationships between organizations (Hill et al., 2009). But does everyone use unethical tactics to the same extent? For example, negotiation researchers have long been interested in gender differences at the bargaining table (Bowles et al., 2022; Kray & Thompson, 2004) and *meta-analyses* suggest that gender can interact with context factors in predicting the initiation of negotiations (Kugler et al., 2018), competitive negotiation behaviors (Walters et al., 1998), and economic negotiation outcomes (Mazei et al., 2015).

Over the last decade, researchers have become increasingly interested in gender differences in unethical negotiation behavior. Although the

majority of studies suggests that men negotiate more unethically than women (Cohen, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2017; Neville & Fisk, 2019), the observed gender differences vary between studies from small (Moran & Schweitzer, 2008) to large effects (Kennedy et al., 2017). This pattern is in line with the notion that gender effects in negotiations are contextually bound (Mazei et al., 2015) and may be, at least to some degree, explained by moderating factors (Kennedy et al., 2017; Kouchaki & Kray, 2018).

Therefore, the main objective of this *meta-analysis* is to provide a comprehensive overview on gender differences in unethical negotiation behavior and examine moderators that may explain some of the heterogeneity of prior findings. Specifically, we used role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) as theoretical framework for our preregistered hypotheses (Nohe et al., 2018), and systematically analyzed extant empirical studies on gender differences and unethical judgements, intentions, and behaviors in negotiations. Beyond examining a gender main effect, we addressed moderators that relate to the negotiating person (e.g., negotiation experience) and the negotiation context (e.g., advocacy and virtuality).

Our *meta-analysis* contributes to the literature in several ways. First, our study integrates the available empirical literature on gender

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: christoph.nohe@uni-muenster.de (C. Nohe), joachim.hueffmeier@tu-dortmund.de (J. Hüffmeier), paul-christian.buerkner@simtech.uni-stuttgart.de (P. Bürkner), jens.mazei@tu-dortmund.de (J. Mazei), ghertel@uni-muenster.de (G. Hertel).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2022.104189>

Received 31 March 2021; Received in revised form 17 August 2022; Accepted 23 August 2022

Available online 28 September 2022

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differences in unethical negotiation behavior and provides an overall effect size measure. Second, by examining moderators that may explain why the magnitude of reported effect sizes differs, our study extends previous theory and research to better understand when gender differences in unethical negotiation behavior emerge. Moreover, insights about when gender differences in unethical negotiation behavior occur provide building blocks for developing negotiation models (e.g., Mazei et al., 2021) and practical interventions (e.g., staffing and training). Third, prior studies have relied on different theories to examine gender differences in unethical negotiation tactics, such as social-cognitive accounts (Kennedy et al., 2017), precarious manhood (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012), evolutionary theory (Lee et al., 2017), and social role theory (e.g., Olekalns et al., 2014). Thus, the theoretical basis seems to be inconsistent and mixed, which can complicate the derivation of clear implications about gender differences in unethical choice, and empirical research can be left unguided in its predictions. To provide an overarching and parsimonious principle to explain gender differences in negotiations, Stuhlmacher and Linnabery (2013) used role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory was originally developed to explain prejudices experienced by female leaders (Badura et al., 2018; Eagly & Karau, 2002). This theory was then successfully applied to the negotiation context because, paralleling leadership, there is a perceived incongruity among women between their communal gender role and the agentic negotiator role, which is expected to produce gender differences (Kulik & Olekalns, 2012; Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013). Prior meta-analyses also used this overarching explanatory principle to examine moderators of gender differences in the initiation of negotiations (Kugler et al., 2018) and economic outcomes (Mazei et al., 2015). Similarly, in the present meta-analysis, we rely on the (in-)congruity between the female gender role and unethical negotiation choice (Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013) to derive and test predictions about gender differences and their moderators. Thus, our study integrates and extends previous theory and research to better understand when gender influences unethical behavior in negotiations. Finally, we used a Bayesian framework as more appropriate analysis to compare whether the existing body of empirical work on gender and unethical negotiation behavior is in line with a gender-similarity perspective (e.g., Hyde, 2005, 2014) or a gender-difference perspective—the hypothesis we propose.

1.1. Unethical choice in negotiations

Negotiations are “an interpersonal decision-making process by which two or more people agree how to allocate scarce resources” (Thompson, 2000, p. 2). During a negotiation, different factors can affect negotiators’ decision to make unethical choices (for reviews, see Gaspar & Schweitzer, 2013, 2019). Unethical behaviors can be defined as “any action that is morally unacceptable to the larger community” (Jones, 1991, p. 367). Rational choice frameworks (Lewicki, 1983) suggest that people use unethical choice whenever the perceived benefits exceed the perceived costs. People are also more likely to use unethical choice when they can rationalize its use (e.g., Ayal et al., 2015; Kennedy et al., 2017). Another explanation relates to individual differences between negotiators. For example, proself negotiators use more unethical behavior in negotiations as compared to prosocial negotiators (Reinders Folmer & Cremer, 2012). Additionally, how negotiators understand and construct the negotiation can affect unethical choice. For example, negotiators who understand negotiations in terms of a “win frame” are more likely to use unethical behaviors as compared to negotiators with a “cooperate frame” (Schweitzer et al., 2005). Finally, negotiators may engage in unethical choice to protect themselves when they expect the other negotiation party to be exploiting (Dees & Cramton, 1991; Olekalns & Smith, 2009).

Negotiators may apply different forms of unethical behaviors. For example, negotiators may engage in false promises (e.g., promising that good things will happen to the opponent if they give what the other

party wants), misrepresentation of information (e.g., intentionally misrepresenting information to strengthen one’s position), inappropriate information gathering (e.g., gaining confidential information about the opponent’s position), attacking the opponent’s network (e.g., trying to get the opponent fired so that another person will take their position), and the strategic use of positive and negative affect (Lewicki et al., 2007; Robinson et al., 2000). Additionally, misrepresentation of information can occur through the active use of false statements (i.e., lying by commission) and through withholding relevant information (i.e., lying by omission; Schweitzer & Croson, 1999). In addition to unethical behaviors, negotiators may have unethical intentions, which have been defined as “the expression of one’s willingness or commitment to engage in an unethical behavior” (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010, p. 2). For example, negotiators may express their willingness to attack the opponent’s network (Robinson et al., 2000). Moreover, negotiators may form unethical judgements, which refer to the evaluation that a behavior is morally acceptable (Jones, 1991; Rest, 1986). For example, negotiators may find it appropriate to use false promises (Robinson et al., 2000).

Empirical studies found correlations of 0.72 for the relationship between unethical judgements and unethical intentions (Barnett & Vaicys, 2000). Similarly, general reviews (Cooke & Sheeran, 2004) reported correlations up to the magnitude of 0.77, 0.61, and 0.75 for the judgement-intention, the judgement-behavior, and the intention-behavior relationships, respectively. These findings are in line with theories suggesting close relationships between unethical judgements, intentions, and behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Rest, 1986). Given that unethical judgements, intentions, and behaviors are empirically and theoretically closely linked, we follow past work (e.g., Kish-Gephart et al., 2010) and treat them as one overarching construct. For this overarching construct, we will use the umbrella term unethical choice in the following. To empirically clarify whether this use is adequate, we will examine whether the results differ when studying unethical judgement, intention, or behavior as dependent variable.

1.2. Gender roles and unethical choice in negotiations

Negotiation researchers have applied different theoretical perspectives to understand gender differences at the bargaining table (Kray & Thompson, 2004). We chose role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) for several reasons. First, social role theories, like the related role congruity theory, integrate several theoretical approaches and offer a unifying framework for predicting gender differences (for an overview, see Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013). Second, role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) has been shown to meaningfully predict gender differences and their moderators for the initiation of negotiations (Kugler et al., 2018) and economic negotiation outcomes (Mazei et al., 2015). In contrast, other theories like precarious manhood (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012), social-cognitive accounts (Kennedy et al., 2017), and evolutionary theory (Lee et al., 2017) provide less clear predictions regarding factors that have been shown to moderate the gender difference in unethical negotiation choice (e.g., advocacy; Kouchaki & Kray, 2018). Third, by referring to (increases in) role congruity as the overarching principle for main and moderating effects, role congruity theory is parsimonious in the number of required assumptions (Mazei et al., 2015). Fourth, role congruity theory allows going beyond proximal causes for gender differences as it is linked to explanations of the distal origins (Wood & Eagly, 2002). Insight into the origins of differences between women and men is inherently interesting for both researchers and the general public, and it informs theory broadly: As Wood and Eagly (2002, p. 699) put it, “understanding the distal causes of sex differences constrains psychological theorizing to the extent that it enhances the plausibility of some proximal causes and diminishes the plausibility of others.” For all these reasons, we used role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) as an overarching framework to delineate our predictions. Additionally, we draw from situational ambiguity principles (Bowles et al., 2022; Bowles et al., 2005) to understand when

gender effects proposed by role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) are amplified or reduced.

Role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) is rooted in social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012), which proposes that gender role beliefs can result in gender differences in affect, cognition, and behavior. Gender role beliefs originate from observing women and men performing their social roles. For example, in a traditional context, women tend to fulfill the homemaker role whereas men tend to fulfill the breadwinner role. Gender role beliefs for the female gender role are described as communal, comprising attributes like caring, warm, cooperative, and relationship-oriented. The male gender role is described as agentic, comprising attributes like assertive, competitive, strong, dominant, and profit-oriented (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Gender role beliefs affect people's behavior at least via two mechanisms (Eagly & Wood, 2012). First, gender role beliefs create specific role expectations, and people behave in line with those gender role expectations because role-congruent behavior is socially rewarded, whereas role-incongruent behavior is penalized (i.e., social backlash; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Thus, gender roles not only describe what people (usually) do but they also impose what people should do (i.e., they are descriptive and injunctive; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Second, in addition to mechanisms of social control, gender roles also affect behavior through self-control mechanisms. People internalize gender role beliefs so that these become part of their subjective identities. Gender identities, in turn, guide behavior because people strive to behave in line with their identity (Wood & Eagly, 2015).

While role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) was first used to explain prejudice against female leaders, subsequent work applied its tenets to the negotiation context. Specifically, Stuhlmacher and Linnabery (2013) argued that the negotiator's role is associated with agentic characteristics like dominance and assertiveness and, thus, more incongruent with the female (vs male) gender role. Additionally, Stuhlmacher and Linnabery (2013) proposed that factors can make the negotiation role more congruent for women, thereby reducing gender differences. We follow this reasoning in the present meta-analysis and rely on the (in-)congruity between the female gender role and unethical negotiation choice (Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013) to derive and test predictions about gender differences and their moderators. Role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) suggests that the main reason for gender differences in unethical negotiation choice is the relative (in-)congruity of gender roles with unethical choice. Specifically, using unethical tactics such as lying, threatening, and discrediting the opponent to maximize one's own profit is less congruent with communal attributes as compared to agentic attributes. Therefore, women who engage in unethical choice are more likely to violate their gender role than men. Role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) proposes that women who violate the injunctive norms of gender roles (i.e., beliefs about how women ought to behave) are negatively evaluated for these violations. That is, when women nevertheless engage in unethical choice and, thus, violate their gender role, they may experience backlash and counteract their own gender identity (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Thus, because women are motivated to avoid potential backlash and act in accordance with their gender identity they should exhibit less unethical choice in negotiations than men. We state:

Hypothesis 1: Women negotiate less unethically than men.

1.3. Moderation of gender differences in unethical choice

Role congruity theory implies the relative incongruity of the female gender role with unethical choices in negotiations as a general moderating principle (Kugler et al., 2018; Mazei et al., 2015). Therefore, factors that reduce the incongruity between the female gender role and unethical choice should reduce gender differences in negotiations. The incongruity of the female gender role and unethical choice may be affected by characteristics of the negotiating person and the negotiation context. We address these different categories of moderators next.

1.3.1. Person-related moderators

A person-related moderator that is likely to influence gender differences in unethical negotiation choice is an individual's *negotiation experience*. According to the ambiguity hypothesis, gender effects in negotiations are stronger with higher situational ambiguity (Bowles et al., 2022). Individual negotiation experience is likely to influence the ambiguity in negotiations. Specifically, inexperienced negotiators do not have a specific script of the negotiation process (i.e., high ambiguity) and should, therefore, use more general behavioral schemas (Bowles et al., 2022) such as gender roles as described in role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, as people gain more negotiation experience, they should develop scripts of negotiation processes (i.e., low ambiguity), which should reduce their reliance on general scripts such as gender roles (Mazei et al., 2015). Thus, we argue that for experienced negotiators, gender differences in unethical choice are reduced. Indeed, negotiation experience has already been shown to reduce gender differences in economic negotiation outcomes (Mazei et al., 2015). We state:

Hypothesis 2: The gender difference in unethical negotiation choice is less pronounced when negotiators are experienced rather than unexperienced.

1.3.2. Context-related moderators

In addition to negotiators' experience, other factors are likely to diminish the ambiguity in negotiations, thereby reducing gender differences (Bowles et al., 2022). For example, ambiguity in negotiations can be influenced by negotiators' bargaining range (Bowles et al., 2005; Mazei et al., 2015), explicit statements that wage is negotiable (Leibbrandt & List, 2015), and the extent to which negotiating is perceived as appropriate (Kray & Gelfand, 2009). We argue that the ambiguity in negotiations can also be affected by external *situational cues* that allude to the adequacy of egoistic behaviors such as unethical choice (Kennedy et al., 2017). In negotiation studies, participants commonly receive information about the upcoming negotiation. For example, providing goals to maximize individual outcomes (e.g., Fulmer et al., 2009), financial incentives for good individual performance (e.g., Pierce & Thompson, 2018), or even explicitly mentioning the possible use of unethical behaviors (e.g., Kouchaki & Kray, 2018) are instructions negotiators may receive. Such information should reduce the ambiguity of the upcoming negotiation, because it explains what is required or at least well-accepted. For example, when negotiators are instructed to maximize their individual outcomes, they can act accordingly, which should reduce their reliance on more general gender roles. We state:

Hypothesis 3: The gender difference in unethical negotiation choice is less pronounced when situational cues allude to the adequateness of unethical choice (i.e., instructions to maximize individual outcomes, financial incentives for good individual outcomes, and mentioning the possible use of unethical behaviors in the instructions) as compared to situations without such cues.

Another moderator of the negotiation context that is likely to reduce gender differences in unethical negotiation choice is *advocacy*, which refers to whether parties negotiate for themselves or on behalf of others (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018). For example, parties negotiate for themselves when they negotiate their own salary, whereas parties negotiate on behalf of others when they represent a family member, friend, or client. Role congruity theory suggests that self-advocating women who negotiate unethically risk incurring backlash, because unethical choice could be interpreted as a violation of gender stereotypes (Rudman, 1998; Rudman et al., 2012; Rudman & Phelan, 2008) and, therefore, as incongruent with the female gender role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). When women negotiate on behalf of others, however, the same unethical choice could be interpreted as more congruent with the female gender role of caring for others (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018; Mazei et al., 2015).

Relatedly, women can even receive backlash if they do not advocate strongly enough for others (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013; Heilman & Chen, 2005). This is in line with role congruity theory's (Eagly & Karau, 2002) proposition that women are negatively evaluated when they violate injunctive gender beliefs. When unethical choice is perceived as more congruent with the female gender role, women should have less backlash concerns and be more likely to engage in unethical choice. In line with this reasoning, a recent study showed that other-advocating women negotiate more unethically than self-advocating women (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018). We state:

Hypothesis 4: The gender difference in unethical negotiation choice is less pronounced when parties negotiate for others rather than for themselves.

Another factor of the negotiation context that is likely to reduce the incongruity between the female gender role and unethical choice in negotiations is *virtuality*. Virtual negotiations are those negotiations that "occur using media other than face-to-face communication (e.g., telephone, e-negotiations, video-conferencing)" (Stuhlmacher & Citera, 2005, p. 70). We argue that the gender roles proposed by role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) are likely to have less influence on behavior in virtual as compared to face-to-face negotiations for two reasons. First, female negotiators are likely to experience less backlash concerns in virtual as compared to face-to-face negotiations because virtual negotiations are often perceived as more anonymous (Stuhlmacher & Citera, 2005). Second, negotiators' gender identities are often less salient in virtual as compared to face-to-face negotiations because virtual negotiations provide less (or even no) social cues about negotiators' gender (Stuhlmacher et al., 2007). In sum, the decreased backlash concerns and the reduced salience of negotiators' gender identity in virtual as compared to face-to-face negotiations are likely to make women's behavior less congruent with the female gender role. As a result, we expect the gender difference in unethical choice to be smaller in virtual than in face-to-face negotiations. We state:

Hypothesis 5: The gender difference in unethical negotiation choice is less pronounced in virtual negotiations as compared to face-to-face negotiations.

The *integrative potential* of a negotiation is another important facet of the negotiation context. Negotiation researchers distinguish between distributive and integrative negotiations. Distributive negotiations typically have one single issue (e.g., price) and an increase in profit for one party corresponds to an equivalent decrease in profit for the other party (i.e., a zero-sum situation). In contrast, integrative negotiations often contain several issues, which are valued differently by the negotiation parties, and, therefore, provide opportunities for joint gains (Mazei et al., 2015). Is the integrative potential likely to influence gender differences in unethical choice? For example, are women more likely to lie in integrative negotiations, because they perceive lower risks of being detected and, therefore, lower risks of social backlash (Rudman & Phelan, 2008)? In contrast, are men more likely to lie in integrative negotiations, because they perceive more opportunities to do so? To address the open question of whether the integrative potential moderates the gender difference in unethical choice, we pose the following research question:

Research Question 1: Does the gender difference in unethical choice depend on the negotiation type (i.e., distributive vs Integrative negotiations)?

Another context factor, which is likely to influence the degree of (in-)congruity between gender roles and behavior, is the societal culture (please note that societal-level cultural factors do not automatically mitigate gender effects, see, Breda et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2020).

Cultures strongly differ regarding their *gender inequality*, which refers to the degree to which equality between men and women is realized in a certain culture (Kugler et al., 2018). For example, the United Nations assess gender inequality by women's reproductive health and their participation in the labor force and politics (Human Development Report, 2018). Prior studies suggest that gender inequality is related to higher levels of hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick et al., 2000; Glick et al., 2004) and that stereotypes of men more closely align with values that are particularly valued in a culture compared to stereotypes of women (Cuddy et al., 2015). In terms of role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012), gender inequality should reflect the degree of congruity between female and male gender roles because the positions that men and women occupy in a society form people's gender roles (Kugler et al., 2018). If there is high gender equality, role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012) would suggest that male and female gender roles converge, which in turn should lead to converging expectations about social backlash upon using unethical negotiation behavior. In contrast, if there is high gender inequality, role congruity theory would suggest that male and female gender roles greatly differ. Women (vs men) should, therefore, expect more social backlash upon using unethical negotiation behavior. Consequently, in gender-equal cultures, differences between women's and men's unethical choice in negotiations should be smaller than in gender-unequal cultures. We state:

Hypothesis 6: The gender difference in unethical negotiation choice is less pronounced in cultures with low, as compared to high, gender inequality.

2. Method

We preregistered this *meta-analysis* (Nohe et al., 2018). The pre-registration, dataset, analyses syntaxes, and results can be downloaded under the following links: <https://osf.io/jwv2e> and <https://osf.io/ctnw9/>.^{1, 2}

¹ In the preregistration, we hypothesized that the gender difference in unethical negotiation choice would be more pronounced when negotiators expect repeated interactions in the future as compared to a single interaction. Specifically, negotiators often expect to meet their negotiation partner again in the future, for example when negotiating with a classmate, neighbor, friend, supervisor or coworker. On the other hand, negotiators may expect only a single interaction, for example when negotiating with an unknown person. We coded 0 if participants were likely to expect a single interaction with their negotiation partner ($m = 0; n = 0$), for example because negotiation partners were from different companies or universities. We coded 1 if participants were likely to expect a repeated interaction with their negotiation partner ($m = 15; n = 1,618$), for example because negotiation partners were from the same company or class. Unfortunately, we could not test this hypothesis because the included primary studies did not provide samples that expected single interactions.

² During the preregistration, we had hoped this *meta-analysis* could provide some insights into the processes underlying the gender difference in unethical choice. Specifically, we wanted to explore whether the processes are rather automatic or rather controlled by testing outcome type (i.e., unethical judgement, intention, and behavior) as moderator (for a similar approach see: Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). To this end, we included an explorative research question in our preregistration: Is the gender difference a function of unethical judgement, unethical intention, and unethical behavior? However, after inspecting our data, we think that we cannot draw valid conclusions from comparing the outcome types (i.e., unethical judgement, intention, and behavior), because outcome type may be confounded by other factors (e.g., judgement and intention are assessed via questionnaires, whereas behavior is assessed via various different methods). Therefore, we test outcome type as moderator, which is in line with our preregistration, but refrain from drawing conclusions about the underlying processes from these explorative tests.

2.1. Inclusion criteria and literature search

We applied four criteria to determine study eligibility. First, the study focused on negotiations between two individuals rather than general ethical decisions or behaviors (e.g., McCabe et al., 2006; Rixom & Mishra, 2014). Second, the study provided a clear measurement or operationalization of unethical choice and gender. Third, the study provided sufficient statistical information for the calculation of an effect size (Hedges' g) and its direction for the gender difference in unethical negotiation choice. If necessary statistical information was not reported, we contacted the authors twice. If they did not provide the necessary information, the study was excluded. Fourth, the study provided the necessary information in English.

We used six different search procedures in identifying studies that met our criteria. First, we conducted an electronic keyword search within the databases Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycINFO, Educational Research Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest International Dissertations & Theses International, and Web of Science. We combined keywords for negotiations (*negotiate** OR *bargain** OR *conflict**), unethical tactics (*decept** OR *deceiv** OR *cheat** OR *unethic** OR *immoral** OR *dishonest** OR *lying* OR *lie* OR *lies*), and gender (*gender* OR *sex* OR *male* OR *female*). To reduce the number of records that are not in line with our inclusion criteria, we followed prior meta-analyses on gender difference in negotiations (e.g., Mazei et al., 2015; Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999) and excluded *HIV*, *AIDS*, *homosex**, *gay*, *condom*, *lesbian**, *parental*, *motherhood*, *couple*, and *marri**. Second, we inspected the reference lists of previous meta-analyses, qualitative reviews, and articles on unethical negotiations to identify more articles relevant to our meta-analysis (most notably, Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012; Kray & Thompson, 2004; Lee et al., 2017; Mazei et al., 2015; Olekalns et al., 2014; Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013; Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999). Third, we conducted a forward search via Web of Science with the aforementioned meta-analyses, qualitative reviews, and articles on unethical negotiations. Fourth, we inspected conference proceedings of the last 5 years for the Academy of Management (AOM), European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP), International Association for Conflict Management (IACM), and Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). If potential studies were identified, we contacted the authors. If they did not provide the necessary information, the study could not be included. Fifth, we sent e-mails to several listservs in which we encouraged researchers to send us unpublished studies (i.e., the Organizational Behavior Division of the Academy of Management, the Conflict Management Division of the Academy of Management [CMDNET], the International Association for Conflict Management [IACM], the European Association of Social Psychology [EASP], and the German Psychological Society [DGPs]). Sixth, we directly emailed authors of published papers and other researchers in the field of gender and negotiations and asked for unpublished studies.

The search yielded a total of 2,012 records, which were checked for study eligibility. We excluded records because they were duplicates (139 records), they referred to irrelevant topics (1,759), or full-texts were not available and authors did not respond to our requests (8). Of the remaining 106 records, we excluded articles because they did not focus on negotiations between individuals (but on general unethical decisions; 11; e.g., Rixom & Mishra, 2014), did not assess unethical choice (18), were not empirical primary studies but rather reviews (17), reused a dataset that was already included in this meta-analysis (1; Fleck et al., 2016), or did not report necessary statistical information to calculate an effect size and authors did not answer our requests (29). This literature search was conducted from May to December 2018 and yielded 29 articles with a total of 58 samples (m), 93 effect sizes (k), and 12,707 participants (N). We updated the literature search in January 2020. The final data set included 33 articles with a total of 70 samples, 116 effect sizes, and 14,028 participants (6,343 women and 7,685 men).

2.2. Coding of study characteristics

Nineteen articles were coded by two authors of this meta-analysis. The first author coded the remaining fourteen articles of which a random sample of six studies were additionally coded by another author. Interrater agreement was high (99 % and 85 % of all ratings, respectively), and all diverging ratings were discussed until consensus was reached.

Please note that the primary studies used several different study procedures and paradigms. Therefore, we could not code all moderator variables for all 70 samples included in this meta-analysis. For example, some studies did not provide a specific negotiation task to their participants (e.g., Study 1 from Lee et al., 2017) or asked participants to recall a negotiation situation from their past experience (e.g., Banai et al., 2014). Consequently, we could not code negotiation characteristics for those studies (e.g., external situational cues, advocacy, virtuality, expectation of future interaction, and integrative versus distributive negotiations). Below, we describe the coding of our moderation variables in more detail.

Negotiation experience. Even a single negotiation experience can affect how people negotiate (Thompson, 1990; Zerres et al., 2013). Accordingly, we coded experience as 1 if participants had at least a minimum of negotiation experience ($m = 36$; $n = 7,566$), for instance because of previous experiences in negotiation classes. Additionally, we coded employees and MBA student samples as possessing a minimum of negotiation experience because research suggests that those samples have substantial negotiation experience. For example, 75 % of MBA students indicated to have salary negotiation experience in Porter et al. (2004). In contrast, we coded negotiation experience as 0 if participants did not have prior negotiation experience ($m = 31$; $n = 5,256$).

External situational cues. External situational cues refer to cues that allude to the adequateness of egoistic negotiation tactics such as unethical choice. We coded external situational cues as 1 if participants received such situational cues ($m = 16$; $n = 2,517$), such as instructions to maximize individual outcomes (e.g., Fulmer et al., 2009), financial incentives for good individual outcomes (Kennedy et al., 2017), and explicitly mentioning the possible use of unethical behaviors in the instructions (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018). In contrast, we coded external situational cues as 0 if participants did not receive such information ($m = 54$; $n = 11,511$).

Advocacy. Advocacy refers to whether parties negotiated for themselves or on behalf of others (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018). Advocacy was coded as 0 if participants negotiated for themselves ($m = 60$; $n = 12,506$) and as 1 if participants negotiated on behalf of others ($m = 10$; $n = 1,522$).

Virtuality. Virtual negotiations refer to negotiations that “occur using media other than face-to-face communication (e.g., telephone, e-negotiations, video-conferencing)” (Stuhlmacher & Citera, 2005, p. 70). We coded 0 for face-to-face negotiations, ($m = 12$; $n = 1,286$) and 1 for virtual negotiations ($m = 9$; $n = 1,564$).

Integrative versus distributive negotiations. We coded distributive negotiations as 0 ($m = 22$; $n = 3,879$) and integrative negotiations as 1 ($m = 8$; $n = 1,077$).

Gender inequality. Gender inequality refers to the degree to which equality between men and women is put into practice in a certain culture (Kugler et al., 2018). We used the United Nations' Gender Inequality Index, which assesses a country's gender inequality in three domains: Economic status (i.e., female and male labor market participation rates), empowerment (i.e., proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males with at least some secondary education), and reproductive health (i.e., maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; Human Development Report, 2018). The index ranges from 0 % equality to 100 % equality. We coded the gender inequality index for the country where the study was conducted. Thus, we followed prior meta-analyses (e.g., Shan et al., 2019; Kugler et al., 2018) and used the country of study as a proxy for the sample's

cultural background. Additionally, we used the index score from about the year where the study was conducted (publication year minus two years), because gender inequality varies slightly over time.

2.3. Features of the analyzed studies

The 70 included samples had an average sample size of 200 participants (range = 29 – 782). Mean proportion of women was 46 percent (range = 00 – 83; information was provided for $m = 70$) and participants' mean age was 30.58 years (range = 19.00 – 55.64; information was provided for $m = 56$). The samples included employees ($m = 22$), MBA students ($m = 13$), undergraduate students ($m = 13$), mixed or not further specified student samples ($m = 12$), and other samples (i.e., not further specified or mixed; $m = 10$). Thirty-six samples were from the USA, six from Germany, five from Canada, four from China, four from Israel, and one each from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Greece, Japan, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and the United Arab Emirates. Three studies used samples from two different countries (Canada/USA, China/USA, and Israel/Kyrgyzstan). Eighty-two effect sizes assessed unethical judgement, nine effect sizes assessed unethical intentions, and 25 effect sizes assessed unethical behavior. Only one of the included articles (Pierce & Thompson, 2018; Studies 2 and 3) comprised power disparities among the negotiation parties, and only two of the included articles (Lee et al., 2017, Studies 2 and 3; Olekalns et al., 2014) provided information about opponent's sex (i.e., same-sex and mixed-sex negotiations).

2.4. Analysis

For each effect size, we used means, standard deviations, and sample sizes for men and women to compute the standardized mean difference Hedges' g , which corrects for bias in small samples (Hedges & Olkin, 1985). If means, standard deviations, and sample size for each gender were not available, we computed Hedges' g from other statistical information (e.g., correlations). A positive sign of Hedges' g in this meta-analysis denotes more unethical choice for men than for women. In contrast, a negative sign of Hedges' g denotes more unethical choice for women than for men.

We used a hierarchical meta-analysis with three levels to accommodate the dependency of our data. Specifically, multiple effect sizes [level 1] were nested within samples [level 2] and multiple samples were nested within articles [level 3]. We used a Bayesian framework for testing our hypotheses for three reasons. First, we wanted to assess the evidence for the H_0 (i.e., the gender-similarity hypothesis; Hyde, 2005, 2014) via Bayes factors (Keyes et al., 2020), which cannot be done within a frequentist framework. In this meta-analysis, the Bayes factor provides the ratio of the marginal likelihoods of the H_0 against the H_1 . For example, a Bayes factor of 5 indicates that the H_0 is 5 times more likely than the H_1 , given equal prior probabilities of both hypotheses. Bayes factors of 1 to 3 suggest anecdotal evidence, 3 to 10 moderate evidence, and 10 to 30 strong evidence (Lee & Wagenmakers, 2014). Second, we wanted to assess the evidence for the H_1 using posterior probabilities which is a more direct, intuitive, and meaningful statement as compared to a frequentist p value, which does not actually say how likely the H_1 is on the basis on evidence (Lee & Wagenmakers, 2014). In the present study, posterior probabilities indicate the probability of a positive effect between gender and unethical choice, given the model and the data. Third, we wanted to use some prior information in our models. We set a normal (mean = 0, $sd = 0.25$) prior on the overall meta-analytic effect size of the gender difference representing our prior belief that gender differences should be, if at all existent, of small to medium size. Specifying an informative prior on this overall effect size is required for Bayes factor analyses to be meaningful (Lee & Wagenmakers, 2014). All non-Bayes factor results were insensitive to that prior choice. Priors on other parameters (specifically for the between standard deviations τ) were chosen to be weakly informative thus facilitating hierarchical

shrinkage of study estimates, which improves precision of the obtained overall estimates (Gelman, 2006) while keeping their influence on the meta-analytic estimates relatively small.

We report point estimates of Hedges' g and their credibility intervals (i.e., Bayesian confidence intervals), but also traditional p values from frequentist models to reach a broader audience. For directed predictions, we report 90 % confidence intervals and halved p values (Mazei et al., 2015). Additionally, we reran all analyses with effect sizes corrected for reliability (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004). Results remained virtually unaltered and all significant effects remained significant (see Tables 1 and 2). In the following text, we report results uncorrected for reliability to be in line with prior meta-analyses on negotiations (e.g., Mazei et al., 2015). All computations were done in R (R Core Team, 2020) using the package *brms* (Bürkner, 2017) based on Stan (Carpenter et al., 2017) for the Bayesian multilevel meta-analyses and the package *metafor* (Viechtbauer, 2010) for effect size computations, Funnel plots, Eggers tests, Q tests, and p values.

3. Results

3.1. Distribution of effect sizes

The effect sizes ranged from $g = -0.28$ to $g = 0.81$, suggesting substantial variability (see Fig. 1). Forty-five (38.79 %) of the 116 effect sizes were smaller than $g = 0.20$ (i.e., small effects; Cohen, 1988), 70 (60.35 %) effect sizes were between $g = 0.20$ and $g = 0.80$ (i.e., medium effects), and one (0.86 %) effect size was larger than $g = 0.80$ (i.e., large effects). The standard deviation τ_a between outcomes of different articles was 0.06, the standard deviation τ_s between outcomes of different samples was 0.16, and the residual standard deviation τ_e between different outcomes within the same sample was 0.02. A significant Q test ($Q = 271.83$, $df = 115$, $p < .001$) indicated the overall presence of heterogeneity (Higgins & Thompson, 2002).

We conducted a funnel plot analysis to illustrate the distribution of effect sizes and to examine a potential publication bias. Fig. 2 plots effect sizes (Hedges' g) on the ordinate and their standard errors on the abscissa. The assumption behind a funnel plot is that effect sizes based on larger samples (i.e., smaller standard errors) are more precise and should be closer to the average (solid vertical line in Fig. 2) compared to smaller samples (i.e., larger standard errors). Many effect sizes outside the 95 % confidence interval might indicate that particularly large effect sizes get published although they are based on small samples, whereas small effect sizes based on small samples do not get published. A second assumption pertains to the symmetry of the funnel: If the plot is asymmetric, studies with positive or negative effect sizes might be more readily published. Fig. 2 shows a rather small number of effect sizes outside the confidence interval and a sufficient degree of symmetry. Correspondingly, Egger's test (Egger et al., 1997) was not significant ($t = 1.27$, $df = 114$, $p = .21$), reducing concerns about a potential publication bias at least to some degree.

3.2. Gender differences in unethical choice

Hypothesis 1 predicted that women would negotiate less unethically than men. Results of the three-level Bayesian meta-analysis revealed a Hedges' g of 0.25 ($SE = 0.03$, 95 % CI = [0.19, 0.31], $p < .001$), indicating that men overall engaged in more unethical choice than women. The posterior probability indicated a probability of > 0.999 in favor of our H_1 . In accordance with these results, Bayes factors indicated strong evidence in support of the H_1 (i.e., the gender-difference hypothesis; $BF_{01} > 1000$) and strong evidence against the H_0 (i.e., the gender-similarity hypothesis; $BF_{00} < 0.001$). Thus, data supported Hypothesis 1 (i.e., a gender-difference hypothesis). Notably, the gender difference was significant regardless of type of dependent measure, i.e., unethical judgement (Hedges' $g = 0.29$, $SE = 0.04$, 95 % CI = [0.23, 0.35], posterior probability > 0.999 , $p < .001$), unethical

Table 1
Moderator Analyses of Gender Differences in Unethical Negotiation Choice (uncorrected for reliability).

	<i>e</i>	Estimate (<i>SE</i>)	CI	PP	<i>p</i>
Gender Difference	116	Main Effect 0.25 (0.03)	0.19, 0.31	>0.999	<0.001
		Moderators			
Negotiation experience	107	-0.090 (0.060)	-0.186, 0.010	0.932	0.069
Situational cues	116	0.012 (0.072)	-0.110, 0.126	0.426	0.417
Advocacy	116	-0.180 (0.083)	-0.315, -0.043	0.986	0.015
Virtuality	27	0.041 (0.115)	-0.145, 0.232	0.362	0.393
Gender inequality	109	0.237 (0.325)	-0.316, 0.763	0.771	0.190
Integrative vs distributive	41	-0.04 (0.11)	-0.25, 0.19	-	0.297
Financial incentive	116	-0.114 (0.092)	-0.263, 0.036	0.108	0.109
Instructions to maximize	116	-0.072 (0.127)	-0.282, 0.135	0.285	0.315
Mentioning UC	116	0.202 (0.092)	0.052, 0.353	0.984	0.012
Strategic use of PA	112	-0.138 (0.060)	-0.253, -0.016	-	0.016
Passive versus active UC	109	0.175 (0.102)	-0.025, -0.376	-	0.093

Note. *e* = number of effect sizes; *SE* = standard error; CI = 90 % confidence intervals for one-sided hypotheses, 95 % for exploratory tests (i.e., integrative versus distributive negotiations, strategic use of PA, and passive versus active UC); PP = posterior probability; PA = positive affect; UC = unethical choice; *p* values are halved for one-sided hypotheses (i.e., all *p* values except integrative versus distributive negotiations, strategic use of PA, and passive versus active UC).

Table 2
Analyses of Gender Differences in Unethical Negotiation Choice and Their Moderators (corrected for reliability).

	<i>e</i>	Estimate (<i>SE</i>)	CI	PP	<i>p</i>
Gender Difference	116	Main Effect 0.27 (0.03)	0.22, 0.33	>0.999	<0.001
		Moderators			
Negotiation experience	107	-0.100 (0.065)	-0.202, 0.007	0.932	0.056
Situational cues	116	0.005 (0.079)	-0.124, 0.135	0.475	0.451
Advocacy	116	-0.190 (0.092)	-0.342, -0.043	0.982	0.019
Virtuality	27	0.055 (0.134)	-0.162, 0.280	0.348	0.397
Gender inequality	109	0.262 (0.366)	-0.347, 0.866	0.768	0.184
Integrative vs distributive	41	-0.05 (0.12)	-0.29, 0.19	-	0.594
Financial incentive	116	-0.116 (0.096)	-0.274, 0.044	0.113	0.135
Instructions to maximize	116	-0.062 (0.133)	-0.277, 0.162	0.311	0.373
Mentioning UC	116	0.201 (0.103)	0.032, 0.372	0.978	0.020
Strategic use of PA	112	-0.173 (0.064)	-0.302, -0.048	-	0.007
Passive versus active UC	109	0.207 (0.114)	-0.029, 0.424	-	0.085

Note. *e* = number of effect sizes; *SE* = standard error; CI = 90 % confidence intervals for one-sided hypotheses, 95 % for exploratory tests (i.e., integrative versus distributive negotiations, strategic use of PA, and passive versus active UC); PP = posterior probability; PA = positive affect; UC = unethical choice; *p* values are halved for one-sided hypotheses (i.e., all *p* values except integrative versus distributive negotiations, strategic use of PA, and passive versus active UC).

intentions (Hedges' *g* = 0.21, *SE* = 0.07, 95 % CI = [0.09, 0.33], posterior probability = 0.999, *p* <.01), and unethical behavior (Hedges' *g* = 0.17, *SE* = 0.06, 95 % CI = [0.07, 0.26], posterior probability = 0.998, *p* <.01). Additionally, the magnitude of gender differences neither differed between judgements and behaviors (ΔHedges' *g* = 0.12, *SE* = 0.07, 95 % CI = [-0.01, 0.25]) nor between intentions and behaviors (ΔHedges' *g* = 0.05, *SE* = 0.09, 95 % CI = [-0.13, 0.23]).

3.3. Person-related moderators

Table 1 shows the results of our moderation analyses. We hypothesized that the gender difference in unethical choice would be reduced when negotiators are experienced rather than unexperienced (Hypothesis 2). However, results did not support Hypothesis 2 (estimate = -0.09, *SE* = 0.06, 90 % CI = [-0.19, 0.0098], posterior probability = 0.93, *p* = .07). We performed additional analyses to get insights why we did not observe the predicted moderation effect. Specifically, we conducted a more fine-grained subgroup analysis, contrasting employees and undergraduate students, i.e., the samples with the presumed most and least negotiation experience (and with the most certainty concerning the adequateness of our coding procedure). Results revealed that the overall gender difference was significant for both employees (Hedges' *g* = 0.17, *SE* = 0.05, 90 % CI = [0.09, 0.26], posterior probability > 0.999) and undergraduate students (Hedges' *g* = 0.34, *SE* = 0.09, 90 % CI = [0.19,

0.49], posterior probability > 0.999). Notably, the gender difference in unethical negotiation choice tended to be smaller for employees than for undergraduate students (ΔHedges' *g* = 0.17, *SE* = 0.10, 90 % CI = [-0.0047, 0.33], posterior probability = 0.95). These results tend to be in line with the assumption that negotiation experience reduces gender differences in unethical negotiation choice.

3.4. Context-related moderators

We predicted that the gender difference in unethical choice would be reduced through situational cues that allude to the adequateness of unethical choice (Hypothesis 3). Results did not support Hypothesis 3 (estimate = 0.01, *SE* = 0.07, 90 % CI = [-0.11, 0.13], posterior probability = 0.43, *p* = .42).³ Additionally, we hypothesized that the gender difference would be attenuated when parties negotiated for others rather than for themselves (advocacy; Hypothesis 4). In line with this hypothesis, results revealed that the gender difference was significantly reduced when negotiators acted on behalf of others as compared to negotiating for themselves (estimate = -0.18, 90 % CI = [-0.32, -0.04], *p* = .02). The posterior probability indicated a probability of 0.99 in favor of our hypothesis. That is, results supported Hypothesis 4.

Moreover, we assumed that the gender difference in unethical choice would be reduced when parties negotiate virtually as compared to face-to-face (Hypothesis 5). However, results did not support Hypotheses 5 (estimate = 0.04, *SE* = 0.12, 90 % CI = [-0.15, 0.23], posterior

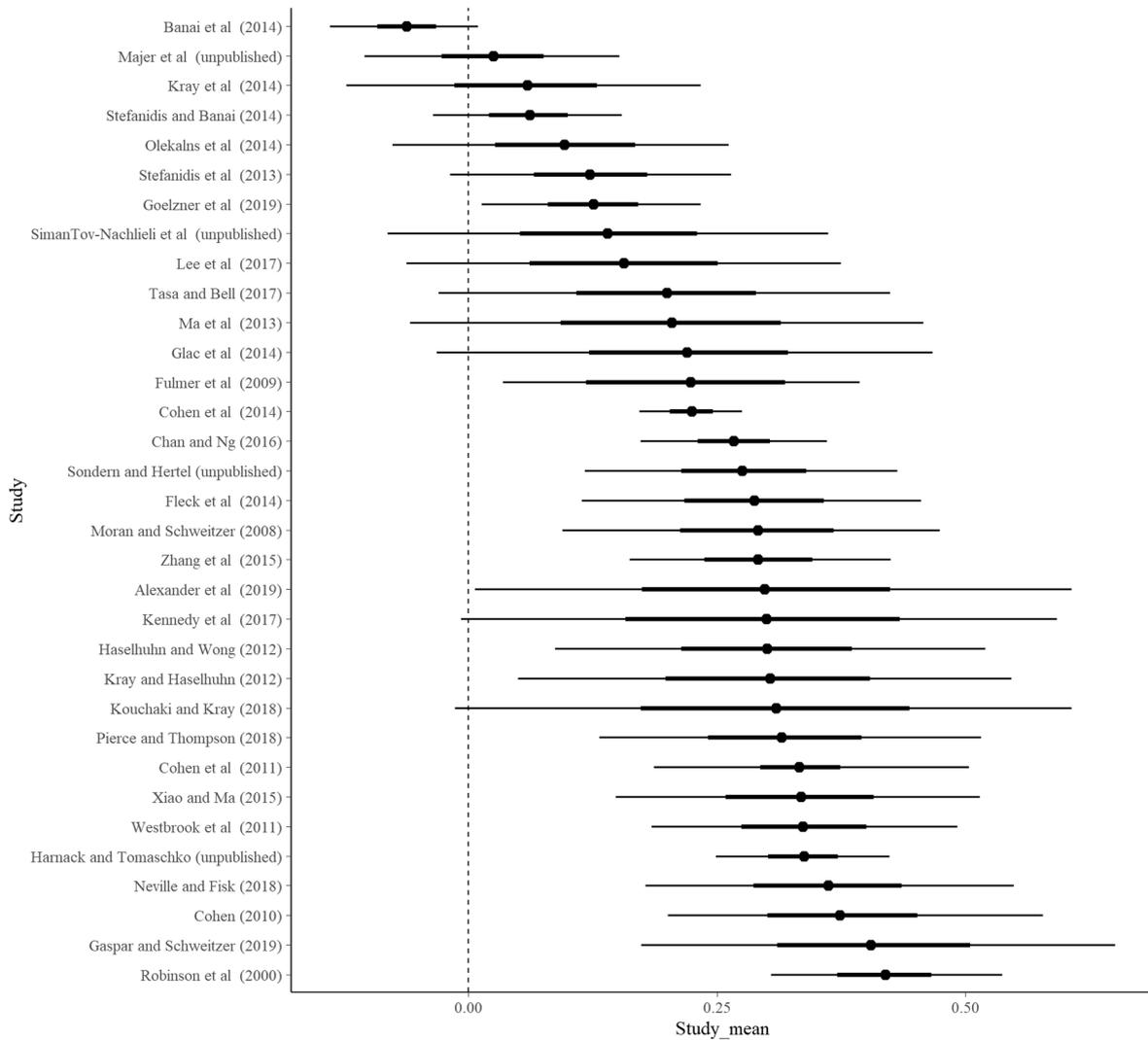


Fig. 1. Distribution of effect sizes with 50% credibility intervals (thicker bars) and 90% credibility intervals (thinner bars).

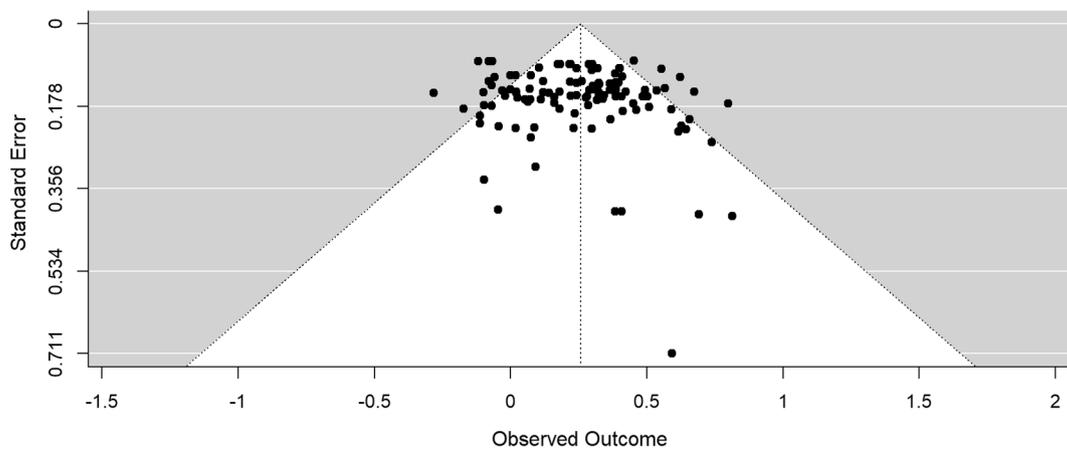


Fig. 2. Funnel plot of the effect sizes.

probability = 0.36, $p = .39$). Finally, results did not reveal a moderation effect for negotiation type (i.e., integrative versus distributive negotiations; see Research Question 1; estimate = -0.04, $SE = 0.11$, 95 % CI = [-0.25, 0.19], $p = .30$).

Finally, we predicted that the gender difference in unethical choice would be reduced in gender-equal cultures as compared to gender-

unequal cultures (Hypothesis 6). However, results did not support Hypothesis 6 (estimate = 0.24, $SE = 0.33$, 90 % CI = [-0.32, 0.76], posterior probability = 0.77, $p = .19$).

3.5. Exploratory analyses

Some types of unethical choice may be more in line with the female role as compared to other forms of unethical choice. Consequently, the gender difference we found might be qualified by different forms of unethical choices. One such form of unethical choice may be the strategic use of positive affect (Chan & Ng, 2016; Lewicki et al., 2007). Indeed, additional moderation results (estimate = -0.14, SE = 0.06, 95 % CI = [-0.25, -0.02], $p = .02$) revealed that the gender difference was significantly smaller for the strategic use of positive affect (Hedge's $g = 0.12$; six effect sizes) as compared to all other forms of unethical choice (Hedge's $g = 0.26$; 106 effect sizes).

We additionally explored whether the distinction between passive (i.e., withholding information, lying by omission; four effect sizes) and active forms of unethical choice (i.e., misrepresentation, lying by commission; 105 effect sizes) moderated the gender difference in unethical negotiation choice. However, the additional analysis did not support a moderating role (estimate = 0.18, SE = 0.10, 95 % CI = [-0.03, 0.38], $p = .09$). More effect sizes on passive unethical choice would be desirable to draw more reliable conclusions (Jackson & Turner, 2017). Therefore, we encourage future primary studies to further examine whether passive versus active forms of unethical negotiation choice moderate the gender difference we found in this *meta-analysis*.

4. Discussion

This study examined whether women negotiate less unethically than men. We conducted a comprehensive *meta-analysis*, thereby integrating the available literature on gender differences in unethical negotiation choice. Overall, the data confirmed our prediction based on role congruity theory that women negotiate less unethically than men. Notably, this gender difference is robust and can be observed similarly for unethical judgements, unethical intentions, and unethical behaviors in negotiations. In contrast, no evidence was found for a gender-similarity hypothesis (Hyde, 2005, 2014) as shown by the obtained Bayes Factors.

Additionally, we examined moderators of the gender difference in unethical negotiation choice. Specifically, we derived the relative incongruity between the female gender role and unethical negotiation choice as an overarching moderating principle from role congruity theory (see Mazei et al., 2015 for a similar approach). In support of this reasoning, our results showed that gender differences are reduced when parties negotiate on behalf of another party (i.e., advocacy). This finding is in line with our assumption that unethical choice violates the female gender role to a lesser extent when this unethical choice is made for the sake of another person. Our result is consistent with prior findings showing that advocacy leads women to use more unethical behavior (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018) and reduces the gender difference in economic negotiation outcomes (Mazei et al., 2015).

The size of the overall gender difference was rather small ($g = 0.25$) which is in line with effect sizes reported in prior *meta-analyses* on gender and negotiations. For example, *meta-analyses* reported gender differences of $g = 0.20$ for the initiation of negotiations (Kugler et al., 2018) and negotiation effectiveness (Mazei et al., 2015). However, even small effects can be meaningful in negotiations. Specifically, the overall gender difference in our study suggests that men use unethical choices in negotiations approximately one and a half times more often than women. Even a single lie can strongly influence the results of a negotiation. For example, negotiators may gain short-term profit when lying goes undetected (e.g., Aykac et al., 2017; O'Connor & Carnevale, 1997). In contrast, negotiators who get caught lying may experience a loss of reputation, may not reach an agreement, and may lose profit in the long-run (Bitterly & Schweitzer, 2020; Gaspar et al., 2019; Volkema et al., 2004).

Our finding that women showed less unethical choice in negotiations falls in line with the broader literature on gender differences in ethics. For example, results from prior *meta-analyses* reported small but

significant gender differences suggesting that women as compared to men have a stronger moral identity (Kennedy et al., 2017), behave more honestly in experimental tasks (Gerlach et al., 2019), seem to be more susceptible for communal motives in teams (not letting down the team partners; Weber & Hertel, 2007), have a higher moral sensitivity (You et al., 2011), judge specific hypothetical business practices as more unethical (Franke et al., 1997), and show less unethical intentions and behaviors at work (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010).

In addition to negotiators' advocacy, we examined further moderators of the gender difference in unethical choice. In contrast to our predictions, our initial analyses did not indicate that parties' negotiation experience reduced gender differences in unethical choice. In additional analyses, we found, however, that the gender difference tended to be smaller for the most experienced negotiators (i.e., employees) as compared to the least experienced negotiators (i.e., undergraduate students). This finding reflects first evidence for our assumption that experienced negotiators rely to a lesser extent on more general gender roles as compared to unexperienced negotiators.

Our results did not support the moderating role of external situational cues. This null finding could well be due to a lack of information in the studies included in our *meta-analysis*. Because instructions to maximize one's outcome and financial incentives were not the focus of most studies included in this *meta-analysis*, the authors of the primary studies may not have reported all situational cues we were interested in. As a result, we may lack the necessary information of whether instructions to maximize one's outcome and financial incentives were present in a negotiation or not³.

Not in line with our predictions, virtuality did not moderate the gender difference. We assumed virtuality to reduce gender differences because gender roles should be less salient due to the anonymity in a virtual setting. However, virtuality does not only have the potential to reduce women's backlash concerns and reduce the salience of negotiators' gender identity. According to the SIDE model (Postmes & Spears,

³ We explored our nonsignificant finding. Specifically, we performed additional subgroup analyses to disentangle three different types of situational cues: the instructions to maximize one's outcome, offering financial incentives for good performance, and mentioning the possible use of unethical behavior in the instructions. Results showed that gender differences did neither depend on the instructions to maximize one's outcome (estimate = -0.07, SE = 0.13, 90% CI = [-0.28, 0.14], posterior probability = 0.29, $p = .42$) nor on financial incentives (estimate = -0.11, SE = 0.09, 90% CI = [-0.26, 0.04], posterior probability = 0.11, $p = .11$). However, as an unexpected result, we found that gender differences were not reduced but rather increased when the possible use of unethical choice was mentioned in the instructions (estimate = 0.20, SE = 0.09, 90% CI = [0.05, 0.35], posterior probability = 0.98, $p = .01$). A possible explanation of our unexpected finding is that this explicit cue triggered males more than females to show role-congruent behavior. Following extant work on precarious manhood, Mazei et al. (2021) reasoned that men may perceive a threat to their masculinity and their social status if they fail to be successful in negotiations, which may lead them to enact agentic behaviors (Netchaeva et al., 2015), including unethical choice (Kennedy & Kray, 2015; Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012). This might primarily occur in male gender-typed negotiations—those that are competitive and agentic in nature (e.g., Kray et al., 2001; Kray & Thompson, 2004). Thus, explicitly mentioning the possible use of unethical choice may heighten the perceived competitiveness of the negotiation situation, which increases men's concerns about their masculinity and social status and, thereby, their usage of unethical tactics (Kennedy & Kray, 2015; Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012). Interestingly, recent work (Bowles et al., 2022) suggests that competitiveness cues in negotiations trigger two opposing processes. Cuing competitiveness may reduce ambiguity in negotiations, making gender differences less likely to occur, whereas it may simultaneously increase the salience of gender (i.e., masculine stereotypicality of the task), making gender differences more likely to occur. Although our results suggest that the increased gender salience prevails in our data, we encourage future research to thoroughly examine competitiveness cues in negotiations and disentangle ambiguity and gender salience processes.

2002), virtuality can also increase the salience of those aspects that are presented during negotiations. That is, if information on negotiator gender was present during the negotiation, it may have played a comparable or even bigger role than in face-to-face negotiations. We could not test this assumption due to a lack of primary studies. Altogether, only nine studies examined virtual negotiations and out of these, only two reported whether the counterparts' gender was known to the negotiators. Therefore, we encourage future research to test whether information on negotiators' gender moderates gender differences in virtual negotiations as the SIDE model (Postmes & Spears, 2002) suggests.

We addressed an unresolved research question and examined whether the gender difference in unethical choice depends on negotiation type (i.e., integrative vs distributive negotiations). Our results did not support a moderating role of negotiation type, perhaps because different processes may operate in integrative negotiations in divergent ways. Integrative negotiations may increase gender differences in unethical negotiation choice through increased ambiguity; simultaneously, integrative negotiations may reduce gender differences through more complexity, which may reduce women's perceived risk of detection and incurring social backlash (Rudman & Phelan, 2008).

In contrast to our predictions, the gender difference did not depend on national culture, a result that has also been reported in prior research on the initiation of negotiations (Kugler et al., 2018). A possible explanation for the absence of cultural influence might be the restricted variance across the studies included in our meta-analysis. Specifically, 73 % of the samples were from North America and Europe. This restricted variance simultaneously points to the need for more studies from other geographical regions. Relatedly, we used the country of study as a proxy for the sample's cultural background, which is in line with prior meta-analysis (e.g., Shan et al., 2019), but may be somewhat imprecise. Therefore, future studies may use a more fine-grained approach to assess participants' culture to more fully understand its influence on gender dynamics in unethical negotiation choice.

4.1. Theoretical contribution

We drew on role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) to derive predictions about a gender main effect in unethical negotiation choice and several moderating context conditions. In line with role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), advocacy is a context in which agentic negotiating can be interpreted as communal behavior because people act in a nurturing way to support others (e.g., Eagly et al., 2020; Rudman et al., 2012), the latter being part of the female gender role (e.g., Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013). In fact, although our findings showed that women, overall, used less unethical choices as compared to men, this gender difference decreased when parties negotiated for others (vs for themselves; see also Kouchaki & Kray, 2018). Furthermore, our findings on positive affect are also in line with role congruity theory. Gender differences decreased when parties strategically used positive affect. The female gender role includes attributes reflecting positive affect, such as being "cheerful," "excitable," and "friendly" (Rudman et al., 2012). Hence, strategically using positive affect could be perceived as a role-congruent approach for women negotiators, reducing gender differences. The finding that the gender differences in unethical choice tended to decrease among experienced (vs inexperienced) negotiators, however, may not solely be explained by tenets from role congruity theory but requires additional assumptions, such as the ambiguity hypothesis according to which gender effects in negotiations are stronger with higher situational ambiguity (Bowles et al., 2022). Low ambiguity may, therefore, reflect a boundary condition (Bacharach, 1989) for role congruity theory.

Our result that women used less unethical negotiation choice than men is in line with role congruity theory, but it can also be explained by the status incongruity hypothesis (Rudman et al., 2012). According to this hypothesis, male agency supports the gender hierarchy, whereas

female agency undermines the system in which men have more power. This approach further proposes that backlash against agentic women occurs as people aim to defend the gender hierarchy after a status violation. This view suggests that women's unethical choice reflects a status violation, which elicits backlash. To avoid backlash, women should be less likely to engage in unethical choice as compared to men, which is in line with the result of the present meta-analysis.

In contrast to the gender main effect, the moderating role of advocacy found in extant primary research (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018) and our meta-analysis is relatively difficult to explain from a status incongruity perspective (Rudman et al., 2012). According to this perspective (Rudman et al., 2012), self-advocating women threaten the gender hierarchy, which elicits backlash. When advocating for others, however, women would not threaten the gender hierarchy and avoid incurring backlash, but *only* when they clearly advocate for another man (but not for other women). Yet, in prior research, it is not clear whether women's advocacy would actually threaten the gender hierarchy or not because women advocated on behalf of a "friend" whose gender was unspecified. This leaves open the likely possibility that women also advocate for a female friend (see, for instance, Studies 1 and 4 from Kouchaki & Kray, 2018). In such cases, the risk of incurring backlash for showing unethical behavior would be comparable for self-advocating women and for women advocating for another woman according to the status incongruity hypothesis. Thus, primary studies (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018) and also our meta-analytical results suggest that a moderating effect for advocacy can occur in situations for which the status incongruity hypothesis (Rudman et al., 2012) would not necessarily predict it. Therefore, to derive clear hypotheses and explain the empirical results concerning all of our moderators (including advocacy), we used role congruity theory as a unifying framework.

Our study contributes to role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) by further demonstrating its usefulness for the study of gender differences in negotiations. Prior meta-analyses used role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) for theorizing about gender differences regarding economic outcomes (Mazei et al., 2015) and the initiation of negotiations (Kugler et al., 2018). Taken together, our results and findings from those prior meta-analyses suggest that role congruity theory may offer a unifying framework that accounts for many of the findings on gender in negotiations.

Moreover, negotiating unethically can result in important interpersonal and economic costs if it is detected (for a review see, Gaspar et al., 2019). For example, parties who negotiate unethically are perceived as less trustworthy (Bitterly & Schweitzer, 2020; Schweitzer et al., 2006), receive lower offers (Boles et al., 2000; Croson et al., 2003), are less likely to reach an agreement (Volkema et al., 2004), and realize lower economic outcomes (Boles et al., 2000; Côté et al., 2013; Croson et al., 2003) as compared to parties who negotiate ethically. Hence, the finding that women negotiate more ethically than men on average indicates a clear strength of women. Moreover, this finding contradicts the disadvantage stereotype held by at least some people (Kray et al., 2001; Kray et al., 2014; Kray & Thompson, 2004), assuming that women are less effective negotiators than men.

Additionally, our study contributes to the literature on gender differences in unethical work behavior in a broader sense. Our meta-analysis took a person \times situation perspective and examined gender differences under conditions assumed to yield high versus low role incongruity for women. This reasoning is rooted in role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), which suggests that an internalized gender identity (person) and backlash (situation) are key mechanisms responsible for gender differences. Our person \times situation approach is also in line with prior work on gender differences in negotiations and behavioral ethics (Kouchaki & Kray, 2018; Kugler et al., 2018; Mazei et al., 2015; Trevino, 1986). However, our approach is in contrast to gender determinism, which assumes gender to be a fixed cause of individual traits (Tinsley et al., 2015). In contrast, our perspective addresses "the more demanding question of why the sexes sometimes differ

considerably and at other times differ moderately or minimally or do not differ at all” (Eagly, 1995, p. 148). Our results provide some answers to this question by showing that gender differences in unethical negotiation choice are reduced when parties negotiate on behalf of others (i.e., advocacy; Kouchaki & Kray, 2018), when parties strategically used positive affect, and tend to be reduced when parties are experienced rather than unexperienced negotiators.

4.2. Limitations and directions for future research

This *meta-analysis* has several limitations, which, however, provide fruitful avenues for future research. First, although we derived our predictions from theory, our results do not allow strong causal conclusions because gender cannot be experimentally manipulated (see Kennedy et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2017). However, future laboratory experiments could manipulate the salience of gender roles and examine whether it influences unethical negotiation behavior. Besides causality, such studies would address a key assumption we made about the underlying mechanisms of gender differences in unethical negotiation behavior. Relatedly, we encourage future research to address mediators and suggest backlash concerns as a prime candidate (see Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Women may experience more backlash concerns than men and may, therefore, refrain more strongly from unethical behavior in negotiations. Insights into the underlying mechanisms are important to more fully understand the relationship between gender and unethical behavior in negotiations.

Second, although we tested several theoretically derived moderators in our *meta-analysis*, other meaningful moderators could not be tested because the necessary primary studies are lacking. For example, we could not test whether gender differences are more pronounced when negotiators expect repeated interactions in the future (versus a single interaction) because we could not find the necessary primary studies. Therefore, future studies could examine whether negotiators’ expectations about future interactions influence their unethical choice in negotiations. Additionally, our study could not address the question of whether negotiation power influences gender differences in unethical negotiation choice because we found too few primary studies addressing this issue. We encourage future research to more closely examine how power asymmetries affect gender differences in unethical negotiation choice (Dannals et al., 2021). For example, strong alternatives—a form of structural power—may give women a justification to deviate from gender roles, which may reduce gender differences in unethical negotiation choice. Another interesting direction for future research is whether the negotiation context favors a cooperative approach. We addressed several factors in this *meta-analysis* that allude to the adequateness of unethical choice (e.g., instructions to maximize individual outcomes), which is likely to create a non-cooperative context. However, we could not test whether cues in favor of a cooperative context qualify the gender difference in unethical choice due to a lack of primary studies addressing this issue. Therefore, future studies could examine the implications of a cooperative context for gender dynamics in negotiations and parties’ unethical choice.

Third, in line with prior *meta-analysis* on gender differences in negotiations (Kugler et al., 2018; Mazei et al., 2015), we derived our predictions from role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) which suggests that gender differences emerge because the female gender role is more incongruent with unethical choice in negotiations than the male gender role. Consequently, gender differences in negotiations are mainly explained by processes that take place within and toward female negotiators (e.g., backlash concerns), whereas processes that take place within and toward male negotiators (e.g., masculinity concerns) are neglected (Kennedy & Kray, 2015). Future research may expand the understanding of the role of masculinity processes for the emergence of gender differences in unethical choice. As mentioned earlier, men may have concerns about their masculinity and their social status in competitive negotiations, which may lead them to use unethical tactics

in an attempt to “succeed” and underscore their masculinity (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012; Mazei et al., 2021). Thus, research may examine situational factors that heighten or attenuate men’s concerns about their masculinity (e.g., using masculinity threats or affirmations; e.g., Vandello et al., 2008; Weaver et al., 2013) or relevant personality factors (e.g., shame-proneness due to feeling insufficiently masculine; Gebhard et al., 2019). Such heightened concerns about masculinity may increase the gender gap in unethical choice (Kennedy & Kray, 2015; Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012).

4.3. Practical implications

Our *meta-analysis* has several implications for practice. First, practitioners should be aware that unethical choice can occur in negotiations and that, on average, male negotiators engage in more unethical choice than female negotiators. Second, given that unethical choice can have detrimental consequences (Bitterly & Schweitzer, 2020; Volkema et al., 2004), designing interventions targeted at reducing unethical negotiation behavior may be worthwhile. Our result that men engage in more unethical negotiation choice than women may suggest that it would be especially important to deliver such interventions to men. However, given that both men and women engage in unethical negotiation choice (e.g., Lee et al., 2017), it seems reasonable that all negotiators would benefit from learning how to effectively negotiate without engaging in unethical behaviors. Although we are not aware of specific ethical negotiation trainings, more general trainings in business ethics (Kreismann & Talaulicar, 2021) may reduce unethical negotiation behavior.

5. Conclusion

Over the last decade, scholars have increasingly focused their attention on gender differences in unethical negotiation choice. Although the studies suggested that men negotiate more unethically than women, the findings revealed some heterogeneity ranging from small to large effect sizes, and thus the magnitude of a possible gender difference remained unclear. In this *meta-analysis*, we theoretically and statistically integrate prior findings and examine gender differences in unethical negotiation choice. The available data suggest that female negotiators engage in less unethical choice than male negotiators. This finding holds for unethical judgements, unethical intentions, and unethical behaviors in negotiations. The finding that women negotiate less unethically than men questions the sometimes-drawn picture of the superior “male” negotiator, because women may outperform men when effectiveness depends on reputation and long-term relationships. Additionally, our findings reveal that gender differences systematically decrease when parties negotiate for others as compared to for themselves (i.e., under conditions of advocacy), when negotiators strategically use positive affect as a specific form of unethical choice, and tend to decrease when parties are experienced as compared to inexperienced negotiators. Thus, this *meta-analysis* shows that gender differences in unethical choice can vary depending on the context, which is in line with a context-based perspective and in contrast to gender determinism. In sum, we hope that our findings contribute to a better understanding of gender differences in unethical negotiation choice.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Christoph Nohe: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Joachim Hüffmeier:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Paul Bürkner:** Formal analysis, Data curation, Visualization. **Jens Mazei:** Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Dominik Sondern:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing – review & editing. **Antonia Runte:** Investigation. **Franziska Sieber:** Investigation. **Guido Hertel:** Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review &

editing.

Funding

This research was partly funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy – EXC 2075 – 3907 – 40016.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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