Women's Approaches to Negotiation:
The Role of Negotiation in the Gender Pay Gap

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Abstract

The gender pay gap has a long and well-documented history. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was passed in an attempt to combat this gap in wages between men and women, but as of 2019 women still on average earn less than 80% of what their male counterparts do. Countless factors contribute to this discrepancy, from gender norms to workplace culture to wage structure and so much more. Though there is a significant literature discussing the gender pay gap, the majority of it focuses on external barriers to equality, including but not limited to institutional inequality, social norms, and workplace discrimination. Fewer scholars have addressed the internalized barriers to equality in the workplace that women face—such as how gendered norms and expectations may affect workplace behaviors such as negotiating compensation packages. My project employs qualitative content coding and individual breakdown of semi-structured, in-depth interviews to investigate if, how, and why women's approaches to negotiation may contribute to pay inequity in professional positions. My findings confirm a discrepancy in rates of negotiation between male and female respondents. They also suggest that divergences in the circumstances surrounding negotiations as well as in approaches to negotiation exist between men and women, and among workers with various levels of seniority. Finally, my findings in combination with existing literature suggest a link between negotiation and the gender pay gap.

Introduction

In 1963 the United States Congress passed the Equal Pay Act in order to “prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in the payment of wages by employers” (Equal Pay Act). However, it is now 2019 and women still make only seventy-eight cents to every dollar men earn (El-Ramly 2019, 2) and over the course of her career, a college educated woman will, on average, earn \$713,000 less than her male counterparts (Bazerman et al. 2013, 2). There is extensive literature on the institutional, social, cultural, and other various external obstacles that women in the workplace face when it comes to gender equality, especially with regards to pay (Dunn and England, Paula 1988; Major 1989; Blau and Kahn 1999; Browne and Misra 2003; Abbott Watkins 2018; El-Ramly 2019). However, there is significantly less research on the internal burdens women may unwittingly put on themselves which also contribute to gender inequality in the workplace.

Research shows that on average, women negotiate compensation packages less often than their male counterparts (Leibbrandt and List 2015, 2023; Johnson 2016, 133; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 74; Schneider 2017, 717). One study done by Glassdoor found that 68% of women accept salary offers without negotiating, whereas only 52% of men do so. Furthermore, when women do negotiate compensation, they very frequently aim lower than their male counterparts (Sankar 2019). Though this negotiation discrepancy by no means explains the existence of the gender pay gap, it is reasonable to argue that it is one of many factors contributing to the pay gap (Johnson 2016, 132).

My project investigates if, how, and why women's approaches to negotiation contribute to pay inequity in professional positions. My sub-questions in pursuing this issue are a) Under what conditions do women in professional and managerial roles choose to negotiate or not to negotiate? b) How and to what extent does seniority play a role in women's approaches to negotiating compensation? and c) How do women's approaches to negotiating compensation compare to those of men?

In interviewing women at different points in their careers, as well as a sample of men at similar points in their careers, I illuminate the individual experiences women have regarding compensation negotiations, as well as the particular strategies they employ. By doing so, I hope to contribute to the existing literature in helping women understand the role gender may play in negotiating compensation packages and therefore in a small piece of the gender pay gap.

Background

Historically the workforce has been unofficially segregated on the basis of gender. The concept of "sex segregation"—by which men and women concentrate in different occupations—often manifests in the form of the male-typical jobs being more prestigious and higher-paying than female-typical jobs (Major 1989, 99; Reskin 1993, 242). In 1963 the average female employee made approximately 59% of what the average male employee made annually, constituting a 41% pay gap not controlling for occupation (Abbott Watkins 2018, 1047-8).

When the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was passed, it was done so in acknowledgement of the fact that unequal pay on the basis of sex was not an uncommon practice. In declaring the purpose of the Act, legislators noted not only that discriminatory pay practices on the basis of sex brought

hardship on women, but also that such practices burdened the economy and society as a whole (Equal Pay Act). Over the years, the Act has been amended and modified many times, particularly through the Court system, but the wage gap still exists (Sangerman 1971, 262-5; Abbott Watkins 2018, 1047-8).

In 2018 the average female employee was still only making approximately 78% of the average male employee (Abbott Watkins 2018, 1047-8). Even within the same occupations, this gap exists: in 2018, female auditors and accountants were reported to also make 78% of what their male counterparts did (El-Ramly 2019, 2). Female primary care medical practitioners made 82% of what their male counterparts did in 2018; and female medical specialists, 64% (States News Service 2018). In the same year, female managers averaged 82% of male managers' salaries, retail saleswomen made 71% of retail salesmen's salaries, and female chief executives earned 70% of what male chief executives earned (Hegewisch 2019). These discrepancies only get worse when race and social class enter the picture (Browne and Misra 2003, 493). In 2018, black women on average earned 59% of white men's salaries and Hispanic women, 56% (Hegewisch 2019).

Literature Review

This literature review will examine factors that pertain to women's approaches to negotiation, focusing on the following three literatures: the gender pay gap, workplace culture, and negotiation strategies. Together, these literatures help to explain the discrepancy in men's and women's negotiation, to show the factors that play a part to this variance, and to highlight common perceptions of women negotiators. The literature on the gender pay gap, including its

history and its contributing factors, puts in perspective the context—both historical and current—in which women are asked to negotiate. In following this with the literature on workplace culture, this review will illustrate the interplay between the gender pay gap and working atmosphere. These two building blocks give insight into the environments and circumstances in which women must negotiate compensation. In closing with the literature on negotiation, it becomes clear how the perceptions of women as negotiators, proposed explanations for the apparent negotiation gap, and suggested strategies and solutions for negotiating, all happen within the confines of preexisting structures and norms.

Gender Pay Gap

Clearly the gender pay gap has an extensive history. Even in the face of legislation such as the Equal Pay Act, it still exists not only on an overarching level, but also between men and women working within the same industries. There are two primary economic explanations that are used to account for the persistence of the gender pay gap despite legislative actions taken over the last half century. These are the human capital explanation, and models of labor market discrimination (Blau and Kahn 1999; Reskin 1993).

The human capital explanation posits that as a result of the traditional role women play in the family, women plan their careers around the expectation that their time in the workforce will have to be shorter and/or more discontinuous; because of this, they invest less in training for their potential careers. Accordingly, women earn less than men because they have less human capital based on theoretically voluntary decisions (Reskin 1993, 258; Blau and Kahn 1999, 626-7). It should be noted here that “voluntary” is an imperfect descriptor for these decisions: “voluntary” in this context means that women were not forced to invest less in occupational

training or fired from their jobs—they chose to invest less or to leave. However, the “voluntary” decisions women may make in these situations take place within the noteworthy constraints of social norms, gender roles, workplace culture, family obligations, and more. Women who are aware of these realities may choose to invest less in high level occupational training because they may not see a long-term purpose or benefit in it (Reskin 1993).

The second primary economic theory used to explain the continued gender pay gap is the theory of labor market discrimination. Labor market discrimination models explain discrepancies in gendered occupation and pay that can’t be rationalized by pure economics. They demonstrate how personal biases may affect hiring decisions by employers as well as salary offers, outside of standard supply and demand laws (Blau and Kahn 1999, 627). Because these models essentially account for the remaining aspects of the gender pay gap that have no economic basis, they affirm that discrimination on the basis of sex is in fact a reality—the wage gap does not exist simply because of any hypothesized skill disparities between the genders.

However, there is an additional lens through which to view modern pay discrepancies (though not exclusive to the gender pay gap): theories of intersectionality, specifically with regards to gender and race (Crenshaw 1991, 1242; Browne and Misra 2003). In approaching wage inequalities with a theory of intersectionality, the situational interactions between gender, race, social class, and location, paint a fuller picture of the pay gap. For all the occupational and wage gaps that are stated to exist between men and women, they are further exacerbated when comparing men (specifically white men) to women of color. In 2018, black women holding management, business, and financial positions earned an average of \$1,052/week and Hispanic women earned an average of \$997/week; meanwhile, white women earned \$1,207/week, black men earned \$1,206/week, Hispanic men earned \$1,167/week, and white men earned \$1,615

(Hegewisch 2019). That same year, black women holding professional positions earned an average of \$870 /week, Hispanic women earned an average of \$873/week, white women earned \$1,055/week, black men earned \$1,129/week, Hispanic men earned \$1,183/week, and white men earned \$1,449 (Hegewisch 2019). Of all these groups, women of color consistently come in with the lowest earnings.

Clearly factors of gender, race, and social class, interact with one another to produce an outcome that is more than the sum of its parts (Browne and Misra 2003, 493; Crenshaw 1991, 1242). This can be seen in how black men in 1991 earned a median of \$12,909 a year and white women, \$9,812; but black women earned a median income of \$7,875—lower than both of their intersecting groups did independently of each other (Crenshaw 1991, 1246). Crenshaw argues in her revolutionary piece “Mapping the Margins” that because women of color are subjected to multiple subordination combined with institutional expectations, their experiences and opportunities for meaningful intervention are shaped and limited by these factors (1991, 1251). The socially constructed categories of race and gender are instrumental in maintaining a social hierarchy that places white men at the top and permeates all aspects of society, implicitly giving the dominant group the power to preserve this structure (Browne and Misra 2003, 491).

The historical unofficial sex segregation of the workforce is both a product of this hierarchy and a perpetuating force of it. This gendered segregation is notable not only in how it has stratified power dynamics, but also in the foundation it has set for later generations (Major 1989, 99; Reskin 1993, 242). Female-typical jobs often pay lower salaries, offer fewer benefits, and have less room for growth; they are viewed as less intensive or skilled, and less prestigious (Major 1989, 100; Reskin 1993, 242). These historical job breakdowns could implicitly foster the perception that women may not be as skilled or worthy of higher pay—even in male-typical

jobs—often leading to gendered pay discrepancies within the same industry (Major 1969, 99; Reskin 1993, 242; El-Ramly 2019, 2). Again, when race is factored into the equation, the discrepancies frequently broaden (Crenshaw 1991, 1242; Browne and Misra 2003, 493; Hegewisch 2019).

An additional contributing factor to the gender pay gap—beyond economic theories, intersectionality models, and social norms—is the common practice of requesting salary histories. Studies show that asking about salary histories in the hiring process plays a prominent role in depressing women’s wages (Abbott Watkins 2018; El-Ramly 2019, 4; Marks and Harold 2011, 371). This is because women have traditionally had lower salaries than their male counterparts; therefore, when they are required to disclose salary histories in order to establish their new starting salaries, they are automatically starting from a lower baseline (Abbot Watkins 2018, 1056).

Workplace Culture

The historical sex segregation of jobs has lasting implications for women’s wages and workplace culture. As stated earlier, due to the traditional division of labor, women have a history of being in lower paying jobs (Reskin 1993, 242). Furthermore, when women and men possess jobs requiring equal levels of skill and labor, but one is labeled “female” and the other, “male”, the “male” job receives higher pay (Major 1969, 100). This is all part of a broader trend in workplace culture that places less value on skills and roles customarily designated as “female” (Major 1969, 100; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 75). Data on gendered perceptions in employment from a study of the hospitality industry reveal the continued prevalence of gendered jobs and perceptions of employees: in this study, women were primarily hired and promoted within the

domestic division of hotels while men were brought into the management side of the business (MacDonald and Liff 2007, 125-7). Even when women made lateral moves with regards to their career, this did not typically give them access to general management positions, unlike men who would benefit from such choices (MacDonald and Liff 2007, 128). This is an example of how labor market discrimination manifests tangibly in the workplace.

The term institutional inequality is used to describe “how institutions give rise to inequality by reproducing the social patterns and belief systems that existed in the workplace at the time they emerged” (Albiston 2010, 1093). Institutionalized gender inequality is the phenomenon by which such social institutions continue to reinforce gender stereotypes and gender inequality in the workplace (Albiston 2010, 1115).

Norms, from typical working hours, to the definition of labor, to the division of household work, and more, all come together to create a societal context in which women are put at a disadvantage. Expected to be the primary caregivers at home, working “standard” work hours is more difficult than for their male counterparts; perceived as less dedicated when not in the office during standard work hours, women’s labor is often devalued and female employees may be perceived as less dedicated (Epstein et al. 1999, 87-89; Phalen 2000, 245; MacDonald and Liff 2007, 128; Gill et al. 2008, 225-6; Albiston 2010, 1115; Bevelander and Page 2011, 625). In many cases this may result in their getting passed over for job and promotion opportunities (Epstein et al. 1999, 64-69; MacDonald and Liff 2007, 128; Albiston 2010, 1115-1120). Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, and Sauté’s work shows that when lawyers switch to working part-time (the vast majority of such individuals being women), they are often penalized both with a stigma in their workplace as well as with decreased career opportunities (1999, 64-69). These are examples of the human capital explanation of the gender pay gap brought to life. The typical

workplace culture in which women find themselves is implicitly biased against them, and serves as a barrier to true equality (Epstein et al. 1999, 14 Browne and Misra 2003, 491; Albiston 2010, 1115).

Furthermore, the longstanding segregation of jobs between the sexes—though not quite as blatant as in the past—puts women at a disadvantage in the workplace, even when they do break into higher level, more skilled, and more prestigious jobs. Not only do the perceptions of what women should do well or poorly still persist, but also the traditionally male occupations can have a “boys’ club” feel to them. This simply refers to how the methods of working, communication, and (perhaps most importantly) networking may be male-oriented and favor men (Epstein et al. 1999, 14; MacDonald and Liff 2007, 128; Albiston 2010, 1122; Bevelander and Page 2011, 625). For instance, women may not be seen by their colleagues as manager “material” because of their gender (MacDonald and Liff 2007, 126).

Moreover, studies show that women may have a more difficult time fitting into a circle in which men’s shared experiences in particular unite them, thereby precluding women from being a part of informal and male-dominated networks. This then contributes to the already formal barriers to female career advancement and is named by women as being a critical workplace issue (Phalen 2000, 231; Bevelander and Page 2011, 624-5). One example of how this manifests is in how women are less likely than men to have mentors—a huge asset not only for career advice but also for connections (Phalen 2000, 232).

In a workplace with a historically male-dominated composition, the “male” business standards considered the norm can be detrimental to women’s opportunities for career advancement. Examples of this include the nine-to-five workday, seminars held outside of normal working hours, golfing as a medium for networking or making deals, etc. These

standards are largely unfavorable towards women because of the socialized norms that place women as the caretakers of their families, and men as the breadwinners (Phalen 2000, 236-7; Albiston 2010, 1115). Additionally, research demonstrates that women's preferred networking styles or strengths tend to lie in creating social and personal connections, whereas men's tend to be more formalized or professionally oriented (Moore and Whitt 2008, 309).

In an environment in which women are already at a disadvantage, it makes sense that sexist behavior and sexual harassment would also be an issue for women in the workplace. Nearly one third of women report having experienced unwanted touching or invasion of personal space during their adult lives (Uggen and Blackstone 2004, 73). Of the over 90,000 charges of employment discrimination received by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2015, approximately 45% claimed discrimination on the basis of sex (Feldblum 2016, 7). 25% to 85% of women say they have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace (Feldblum 2016, 8), and when race intersects with gender, a woman is even more likely likely to experience workplace sexual harassment (Feldblum 2016, 14). It should also be noted here that it is estimated that approximately 70% of harassment victims (not specific to sexual harassment) never file a report internally or through legal avenues, so the actual number of individuals affected by workplace harassment is likely higher (Feldblum 2016, 16). This is likely connected to the fact that 75% of employees who speak out against harassment suffered retaliation in some form (Feldblum 2016, 16).

Furthermore, often low levels of sexual harassment do not meet the legal threshold for establishing a hostile work environment, even though they may be unwelcome (Uggen and Blackstone 2004, 76). In some cases a sexist work environment or sexual harassment has even incentivized women to change occupations or leave the workforce altogether (Phalen 2000; Gill

et al. 2008, 225; McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2012; Feldblum 2016, 22). A 2017 study found that targets of sexual harassment were 6.5 times as likely as non-targets to switch jobs, and that women who experienced workplace sexual harassment often suffered financial distress from the ensuing occupational change, decreased work hours, etc. (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2017, 7-9). This study also found that when women in their late twenties experienced such career disruption, it was often linked to decreased career attainment later in life (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2017, 8). Meanwhile, when men experienced educational and career disruption, they were still likely to still secure comparatively high-paying occupations (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2017, 13).

Women who work in environments that have historically been male-dominated—such as law, finance, broadcasting, engineering, and more—are often put in the position of needing to adapt their appearances and/or behavior in order to be able to survive; more specifically, they often adapt to seem more masculine or more feminine in order to avoid further harassment (Phalen 2000, 245; Gill et al. 2008, 225-6). With women increasingly working in areas that have a history of being male-dominant, and frequently finding it necessary to modulate their appearance and behavior in order to achieve security and success, it stands to reason that the environments in which they must negotiate may differ greatly from what their male counterparts may feel.

Women and Negotiation

The literature on women's negotiation is somewhat contradictory when it comes to whether or not there truly is a gap in negotiation between the genders. Though most of the literature states that women negotiate less frequently than men do (Leibbrandt and List 2015,

2023; Johnson 2016, 133; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 74; Schneider 2017, 717), a few studies have found no discrepancy in the frequency with which the genders negotiate (Gerhart and Rynes 1989, 12; Marks and Harold 2011, 387). However, what is consistent throughout the literature is that regardless of the incidence with which men and women negotiate compensation, women on average receive lower monetary returns than their male counterparts do (Gerhart and Rynes 1989, 13; Marks and Harold 2011, 387; Johnson 2016, 133; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 74; Leibbrandt and List 2015, 2017; Schneider 2017, 705-6; Anisman-Razin et al. 2018, 634).

The presence of occupational sex segregation lays the foundation for work environments that reproduce the social patterns of gender stereotyping (Albiston 2010, 1093). A 2017 article analyzing research from recent studies found that because women have historically held jobs perceived as inferior, when they are in a position to negotiate compensation, they do so from a position of decreased authority (Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-75). Furthermore, women are perceived to be less assertive, more cooperative, and more empathetic, (Johnson 2016, 139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-73; Schneider 2017, 704-706). Girls are socialized from a young age to be “nice” while boys are socialized to take risks. Later in life, this can lead to different behavior patterns divided along gender lines, and different ideas of what is proper behavior for each gender (Schneider 2017, 701-2). When women break out of these roles, there is frequently backlash, and they may be labeled as “bossy” or other similar terms; this affects their professional networks and likeability, which in turn affects their ability to perform or get promoted at work (Johnson 2016, 139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 74-76; Schneider 2017, 704-706).

All these circumstances create barriers to women negotiating on their own behalf. However, when women are told that compensation is negotiable, rather than having the situation

be ambiguous, the gap in negotiation dissolves and women negotiate as often as men do; the gap also goes away when women are negotiating on behalf of someone else as opposed to themselves (Leibbrandt and List 2015, 2017; Johnson 2016, 136-7). In fact, research shows that when women negotiate on behalf of a beneficiary, on average, they set their goals 22% higher than when they negotiate for themselves, and that when women are told compensation is negotiable (thereby decreasing the structural ambiguity), the rate at which they negotiate increases by approximately 10% (Leibbrandt and List 2015, 2022; Johnson 2016, 138).

However, these do not resolve the discrepancy in the success women and men experience when they negotiate. Even when women have highly specific, relevant expertise in an area, they are not viewed as equally authoritative as their male counterparts, and their negotiations reap fewer benefits (Anisman-Razin et al. 2018). One element to the disparity in successful negotiation is that the aforementioned social circumstances also lead to employers' being prone to reflect socialized expectations back on women who do negotiate. Research shows that there are some steps that women can take to offset these obstacles, though. Studies demonstrate that just as advocating on behalf of someone else increases women's likelihood of negotiating, so it also increases their likelihood of success; additionally, when women use communal language and talk about benefiting a larger group, they are far more effective and perceived in a more favorable light (Johnson 2016, 137; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 73-83; Schneider 2017, 710-711). Although engaging in these negotiation practices may reinforce the gender stereotypes that in fact foster a bias against female negotiators in the first place, they can be effective. More research would have to be done to explore if conforming to the gender tropes in negotiations has long-term implications for working women later in their careers.

Furthermore, women often bring a unique set of strengths to the table as negotiators that are underrated. Building trust, exhibiting empathy, practicing ethical behavior, compromising, and fostering long-term relationships with the negotiating parties are key to lasting working relationships; these are all skills that women seem to excel in more so than men (Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-78). To be clear, the majority of the literature on negotiation does not claim that these particular strengths women tend to exhibit are biologically grounded; rather, scholars hypothesize that these are socialized behaviors or simply do not address the roots of the gendered strengths whatsoever (Johnson 2016; Kray and Kennedy 2017; Schneider 2017). Regardless, women increase their rates of successful negotiation when they showcase these particular skills, in combination with training, recognizing the stereotypes, and being prepared with solid information on the matters on which they are negotiating (Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-78; Schneider 2017, 702-711). The existing literature does not specify which women or which fields experience the most movement in negotiation success when these actions are taken, but rather speaks to women in general. By furthering the relatively recent research into negotiating approaches for women, it may be possible to close this gap even more.

Theoretical Framework

As demonstrated in the literatures reviewed above, there are several historical, social, and institutional factors that perpetuate the gender pay gap. Women's approaches to negotiation are but one very small piece. This is a topic worth investigating, though, as the current research is not conclusive and it is something each woman as an individual could—within the existing confines and constructs—take into her own hands.

In researching how and to what extent women's approaches to negotiation contribute to the gender pay gap, I hope to contribute to the existing literature and the ongoing dialogue on the matter. My goal is for this project to help illuminate if there is a discrepancy in how men and women negotiate compensation, as well as what factors may be relevant in such decisions and negotiations.

Currently there is little research on what negotiation strategies work for women in a real work environment (as opposed to in a lab study). Therefore, in addition to contributing to the ongoing debate surrounding this general topic, I also hope to shed light on an area that is still in the process of being explored.

This project takes a practical approach to women's negotiation. In holding semi-structured, in-depth interviews with both women and men, I hope to uncover specific strategies that have been utilized by this particular group of respondents, and to analyze how these approaches may or may not align with gender. The underlying theories in the literature regarding the gender pay gap—such as human capital models, labor market discrimination models, and theories of intersectionality—helped frame the questions I asked and my data analysis. I built on these frameworks based on advisory input and on what I learned from my interviews. My biggest goal in this project is to gather accounts of not only the experiences with negotiation that today's professional women encounter, but also the circumstances surrounding those experiences. Though the results are not generalizable, they can provide insight into the individual situations women may find themselves in with regards to negotiating compensation.

Methodology

Research Strategy

To explore the role of negotiation in the gender pay gap, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a sample of twenty-two professionals. Of these twenty-two interviews, six were held in person and sixteen were done digitally (via phone or WebEx). Interview length ranged from approximately ten to sixty minutes, with most landing somewhere in the middle. While I asked most of the respondents about their approaches to negotiating compensation, I also asked some about their experiences on the recruiting and hiring side of the negotiation process. Conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews allowed me to launch a nuanced and comprehensive investigation of the factors that contribute to the approaches professional women take to negotiation.

Though the methodology of conducting and coding semi-structured, in-depth interviews is uniquely suited to my study, it is not without its flaws. My study has a small sample size. Furthermore, because I used convenience and snowball sampling, my sample is not necessarily representative of the total population of people working in professional roles. Though this is not ideal, it is not a serious problem because my study is not intended to be generalizable. Rather, it is intended to offer a unique, comprehensive, and nuanced analysis of the particular experiences of the women in my study. My hope is that it might add to the existing bodies of relevant literature and provide insight to women who may find themselves similarly situated to individuals in my study.

Another potential weakness to the methodology in my study is the phenomenon of social desirability, by which individuals modify their answers to align more closely with what they

believe the interviewer would like to hear. This lowers the veracity and accuracy of responses, and thereby lowers the quality of the data collected from the interview. I attempted to control for this by seeking out instruction on recommended interview techniques, providing anonymity to the respondents, doing my best to make the respondents comfortable, and working with my advisors to craft questions that are as facially neutral as possible.

Alternatively, there is always potential for interviewer bias, in which the interviewer may bring their own preconceived notions or prejudices unintentionally into the interview, thereby biasing the findings and analysis. To combat this I took caution to acknowledge any implicit biases I may hold and listened to feedback from peers and advisors. I am also hopeful that having read so many different literatures helped me to keep an open mind without specific expectations. Finally, there is the potential risk of cherry-picking favorable results or glossing over data. However, because this study is exploratory in its investigation of the relationship between women's approaches to negotiation and the gender pay gap, and because it is not attempting to support a particular hypothesis, I believe that this is not a serious risk.

Despite the potential weaknesses that arise from conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a relatively small sample, this is clearly the best methodology for investigating the relationship between negotiation and pay inequity. The structure of the interviews provides a control from one individual to the next, so that the type of data collected and coded for in each interview is relatively consistent.

However, the flexibility with this methodology is equally valuable. Unlike with a survey or a highly structured interview, semi-structured interviews give the interviewer the freedom to probe into certain topics more with a given individual and allow the individual to speak more freely about the experiences that have been particularly formative for them. In an exploratory study

such as this one, the ability to incorporate this freedom could enable respondents to talk about specific stories involving workplace culture, a memorable negotiation experience, or any number of other topics. Furthermore, the research method leaves room for the individual to go on tangential lines of thought that the interviewer may not have considered relevant prior to the interview. The freedom to have such conversations, to hear such stories, and to observe the thought processes of the respondents has enabled me to provide a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the experiences with and observations on negotiation and pay for the people involved.

Sample

I used a combination of convenience and snowball sampling to reach a sample of twenty-two professionals ranging from entry- to senior-level positions in industries such as law, finance, software, healthcare, and more. I interviewed fourteen women, nine of whom had ten years' or more experience in the workforce and five of whom had five years' or less; and I interviewed eight men, six of whom had ten years' or more experience in the workforce and two of whom had five years' or less. I conducted twenty-one interviews on respondents' approaches to negotiation and careers, and twelve interviews on respondents' observations about other peoples' approaches to negotiation; eleven of the individuals interviewed were asked both sets of questions.

Going into this project, I already had access to a number of individuals in professional and managerial roles from personal connections, work colleagues, and university contacts; from there I got references to a few more respondents. The combination of convenience and snowball sampling does not necessarily lend itself to providing a representative cross-section of

experiences, but it is a sampling strategy that was realistic and accessible for me. My sample was skewed towards individuals who are largely white, well-educated, and wealthier individuals. Though the nature of my sample means this study is not generalizable, it is designed to give an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the approaches these individuals have taken to negotiation, the factors that contributed to those approaches, and the role compensation negotiation played in their lives.

Variables and Operationalization

I examine the following concepts or variables in my study. My dependent variable—so to speak—is individuals' approaches to salary negotiation—if they negotiate and how they negotiate. The independent variables or concepts I explore in my study are gender (as identified by appearance) and seniority (measured in terms of years in the professional workforce, as found in subjects' professional biographies, or as volunteered in the interviews). I assessed the relation of gender and seniority to negotiation approaches in my interview questions, a copy of which can be found in the appendices. However, I was also attentive to a number of other factors that may be relevant to individuals' negotiation approaches and experiences, such as parenthood, salary history inquiries, workplace culture, networking, mentoring, with whom one is negotiating, and ambiguity of negotiation expectations. I also looked at employers' views on the following: good and bad approaches to negotiation, gender and negotiation, characteristics of successful individuals, and parenthood and careers. Because my study has a small sample size, there is not enough variation to permit me to distinguish the effects of all these variables, but I did take them into consideration for the interviews and the qualitative analysis I did.

Method of Analysis

To analyze the data from my interviews, I engaged in qualitative content coding. I recorded the interviews (with the permission of the respondents); upon completing them, I then transcribed them, made the transcriptions anonymous, and destroyed the recordings. I proceeded to qualitatively code the interviews using a codebook which I developed in conjunction with advisors, based on the literature, the interviews themselves, and feedback. For the transcriptions, I used the transcription software Trint to transcribe the recordings and then manually corrected any errors and made any edits necessary for maintaining the anonymity of respondents. I used the software Atlas.ti in order to conduct my qualitative interview coding. As I examined the interviews, I looked for any common themes or apparent discordances that may have emerged from the data, and I analyzed them in the context of the individuals' experiences as well as in the context of the existing literature in order to draw relevant conclusions.

Findings

Overview

Below is a report of the findings from my study and how they compare to the expectations set by the literature. Worth noting is that the data provided does not objectively indicate how "successful" a respondent was in negotiating their compensation package, as I did not collect respondents' salaries. However, the data does illuminate trends in negotiating, as well as trends in gender and seniority as they apply to individuals' negotiations and careers.

Decision to Negotiate

The results of my study indicated that 71% (5/7) of men and 46% (6/13) of women negotiated their initial compensation packages, comprising a 25% gender discrepancy. This aligned with the majority of the literature on negotiation stating that men negotiate more frequently than women do (Leibbrandt and List 2015, 2023; Johnson 2016, 133; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 74; Schneider 2017, 717).

Additionally, 67% (8/12) of senior respondents—respondents in the professional workforce for ten years or more—reported negotiating initial compensation packages, whereas only 29% (2/7) of junior respondents—respondents in the professional workforce for five years or less—did so. This, too, was expected as time in the workforce breeds not only more confidence in one’s ability to negotiate, but also more industry knowledge and more human capital with which to bargain when looking at a new position.

In this study the demographic that negotiated initial compensation at the highest rate was senior male respondents at 80% (4/5), and the demographic that negotiated initial compensation at the lowest rate was junior female respondents at 25% (1/5). This is unsurprising given that men with work experience are at the top of the corporate power structure, and women without experience are at the bottom (Epstein et al. 1999, 14; Browne and Misra 2003, 491; MacDonald and Liff 2007, 128; Albiston 2010, 1122; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-75).

Circumstances Surrounding Negotiation

Workplace Culture

Regarding workplace culture, 90% (18/20) of respondents stated that their companies had an open culture, consisting of open communication, supportive coworkers, and/or collaborative

environments. However, confirming the current literature on workplace culture and gender (Uggen and Blackstone 2004, 73-76; Feldblum 2016, 7-16), 57% (8/14) of women did cite incidences of sexist behavior at their current or previous places of work, whether it consisted of sexual harassment, being passed over for an opportunity or promotion, or being treated differently due to their gender.

While several individuals among the two groups of respondents—those asked about their own experiences negotiating and those asked about their observations on other people's negotiating—did claim that they believed workplace culture affected negotiation, there was no consensus as to the nature of that effect. Therefore, contrary to expectations, workplace culture did not appear to be a proxy for rates of negotiation (Albiston 2010, 1093; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-75).

Salary History

The role of salary history in compensation negotiations was an important part of my study, as the literature suggests that salary history inquiries play a significant role in perpetuating the gender pay gap and depressing women's wages, as women have historically had lower salaries than their male counterparts (Abbott Watkins 2018; El-Ramly 2019, 4; Marks and Harold 2011, 371). This means that when their new salaries are based on their previous salaries, women frequently start from a lower baseline than men (Abbot Watkins 2018, 1056).

Only one employer in this study reported requesting the salary histories of potential candidates. Of the respondents asked about their experiences negotiating for themselves, 31% (4/13) of women as opposed to only 14% (1/7) of men reported being asked about their salary histories, comprising a 17% gender discrepancy. Given the literature on the role of salary history

inquiries and the gender pay gap, this was an interesting correlation; however, there is not enough data here to necessarily suggest causal link between gender and salary history inquiries.

Negotiability

The literature on negotiation suggests that when women are told that compensation is negotiable, the negotiation gap disappears. In my study, 20% (2/10) of respondents were explicitly told that compensation was not negotiable, and the remaining 80% (8/10) were told nothing about negotiability, making the situation ambiguous. Therefore, I was unable to study the role of negotiability in individuals' approaches to negotiation.

Mentorship

81% (17/21) of respondents reported having a mentor or mentor figure (meaning that person may not be called a mentor, but they filled the role of advising the respondent on career choices and/or negotiating). Though there was no correlation between the presence of a mentor figure and the respondents' decisions whether or not to negotiate, when a mentor did advise a respondent one way or the other, the respondent always followed that advice.

Definition of a Successful Negotiation

Another element of negotiations that was investigated in my study was how respondents defined a successful negotiation. When I asked this question, I was curious about how respondents would perceive success in these situations, but also if there would be a break along gender lines. All responses indicated defining success as either "winning" or "mutual satisfaction." Of these, 75% (9/12) of respondents believed a successful negotiation was one in

which both parties were satisfied with the outcome, with exactly 75% (3/4) of male respondents and 75% (6/8) of female respondents coming to this conclusion.

Approaches to Negotiating Compensation

Gender-Neutral Approaches

All respondents who were asked about their own experiences negotiating were coded for multiple approaches, meaning nobody used simply one approach in their negotiations. Among these, the most common approach to negotiation overall was a transparent/direct approach—defined as being straightforward with expectations, needs, and goals—at 70% (14/20) of respondents. Though there were noted gender differences in many of the approaches coded for in the interviews, this approach showed virtually no discrepancies between men (71%, 5/7) and women (69%, 9/13). The consistency of this approach between the men and women was somewhat unexpected, as the literature on negotiation suggests that men are frequently more direct than women when negotiating (Johnson 2016, 139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-72; Schneider 2017, 704-706).

The only other negotiation style that showed up relatively equally among men and women was a reasonable/understanding approach—meaning respondents made efforts to understand the other side and to be reasonable in their objectives and asks. This was observed in 40% (8/20) of respondents negotiating on their own behalf; the gender breakdown comprises 39% (5/13) of women and 43% (3/7) of men being coded for this approach.

Approaches and Gender

The most common negotiation approaches among women, both of which were coded for in 69% (9/13) of female respondents, were a transparent/direct style as detailed above, and an ethical approach—defined as grounding their approach to negotiations in a philosophy of fairness and merit. Being ethical could mean that participants chose not to negotiate further or at all because they felt the compensation was a “fair” amount, or that they believed their performance should speak for itself and their employers would offer what was merited.

While more than two-thirds of women exhibited this approach, only 14% (1/7) of men did. This aligns with the literature finding that women tend to be less assertive, more ethical, and more focused on what is “fair” than men are in general (Johnson 2016, 139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-78; Schneider 2017, 704-706). This is further confirmed by the fact that male respondents in the study were coded for assertiveness 10% more often than female respondents (2/7 men, 2/13 women), and that female respondents were coded for a “performance-based” approach—in which negotiations were grounded in specific accomplishments—32% more often than their male counterparts (6/13 women, 1/7 men). This suggests that the women weighed their performance at work more heavily than men did when negotiating compensation. When the incidence of ethical approaches and performance-based approaches are viewed as part of a larger picture, they suggest that women were more likely than men to negotiate based on what they felt their performance merited and what they felt was fair.

A senior female respondent who works as a financial services principal said the following on negotiating:

“But my just disposition to this is like I would rather go in and outperform and surprise people and trust that I will be compensated for that rather than do it, a lot

of the colleagues I've seen that are all men have done, which is come in demand a guarantee. Demand five million dollars and then they do nothing to, putting their name in our pitch book is the reason they're making that money and they're not doing anything. And then they leave. That is not the way that I operate. It's not the way that I want. I want to have loyalty. I want to work and build things rather than just jump around and get raises here and there... Now, would a lot of guys say that's a smart way to run my... But every day I can wake up and come in and not feel like I am disappointing everybody because I demanded to make more money than everybody else. That feels really yucky to me. So I just decided to be thankful for the opportunity. Thankful for what they offered.”

This view serves as a perfect encapsulation on the ethical, performance-based based approaches that appeared to be more common in women. From the beginning, the respondent acknowledges that her approach to negotiations diverges from that of the men in her life. More than that, though, she acknowledges that these men frequently make more money than she does, likely as a result of their assertiveness. However, she reports satisfaction with her arrangement, because she derives peace of mind from feeling that she has earned what she is making and from feeling that she has been fair. By talking about how she wants loyalty, as well as her desire to not feel that she is disappointing everybody, she demonstrates a different set of priorities while negotiating than the male counterparts she mentions: peace of mind appears to be her primary currency, then followed by compensation figures. This does not necessarily speak to all respondents who were coded for these approaches, or to all female respondents either. However, the value she clearly places on being moral and not asking for or demanding more than what she feels is fair reflects trends found in the study as well as in the literature discussing women's propensity to be more

ethical and less assertive negotiators than men (Johnson 2016, 139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-78; Schneider 2017, 704-706). In fact, this respondent would prefer not to ask for more compensation and instead trust the system and that her superiors will compensate her fairly based on her performance.

Additionally, 54% (7/13) of women were coded as having power dynamics be a factor in their decision whether or not to negotiate as well as how to negotiate, whereas men were coded at 14% (1/7). In this context, “power dynamics” refers to when respondents felt they did not have a sufficient level of agency as compared to their employers.

That this fell along gender lines supports the literature stating that when women are in a position to negotiate, they often do so from a position of decreased authority in part due to the historical gendered segregation of jobs (Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-75). Contradicting the literature, though, is the fact that only one woman out of all the study’s respondents cited concerns about likability and reputation as a factor in her decision to negotiate compensation; furthermore, though she did consider these concerns, she ultimately did choose to negotiate her compensation.

An additional finding among female respondents regarding negotiation styles was that women were more likely than men to adapt their negotiation tactics based on who was on the other side of the table, with 39% (5/13) of women and 29% (2/7) of men doing so. The ability to tailor one’s negotiation style to their audience demonstrates a level of emotional intelligence and people skills. That women were more likely to exhibit this approach than men confirmed the literature’s consensus that one of the strengths female negotiators have is their ability to empathize and build trust (Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-78).

Men, on the other hand, employed a fact-based/analytical approach more often than women. Although women grounded their negotiations in logic and facts such as market rates, company policies, etc. 54% (7/13) of the time (comprising one of the most common approaches among female respondents), men did so even more frequently at 71% (5/7) of the time.

Additionally, men cited the ability to walk away from a negotiation as an essential element of their approaches 57% (4/7) of the time as opposed to women who cited it only 31% (4/13) of the time. This all corroborates the negotiation literature finding that men are often more assertive and less risk-averse in negotiations than women (Johnson 2016, 139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-73; Schneider 2017, 701-706).

Approaches and Seniority

Seniority was proven to be very relevant in respondents' approaches to negotiation in this study. One of the most dramatic examples of this was the 78% gap between senior and junior respondents regarding the role of power dynamics in negotiations, with junior respondents citing it 86% (6/7) of the time and senior respondents citing it 8% (1/12) of the time. Junior female respondents were coded for this at the highest rate, 100% (5/5). That power dynamics were a highly relevant element of negotiation decisions for junior respondents would be only natural, given that they had significantly less experience and leverage than their senior counterparts, and for many this was their first real job. Several junior respondents expressed relief that they had gotten a job at all or that they were worried this might be their only offer. That junior female respondents came in at the highest rate for this factor aligns with the role of seniority in the workforce and the place junior women often occupy in the corporate power

structure (Epstein et al. 1999, 14; Browne and Misra 2003, 491; MacDonald and Liff 2007, 128; Albiston 2010, 1122; Bevelander and Page 2011; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-75).

In fact, one junior female respondent who is employed as a legal assistant said the following about why she did not negotiate her initial offer:

“I was more nervous about just being offered a job. You know, I was desperate because I didn't think I had enough experience or good enough credentials to be offered a job to begin with. So I was just like—it was the first job I was offered.”

The fear of not being able to get another job offer is clearly articulated here. This sentiment showed up in nearly every interview with junior respondents, male and female. In this situation specifically, the respondent was being offered her first full-time, post-graduation, professional job. Her lack of work experience fostered a perceived power dynamic in which she was at a disadvantage. Feeling as though she had no capital with which to bargain, and feeling as though she had no other jobs to turn to or leverage, the power dynamic was the primary reason this respondent did not negotiate.

A junior male respondent who works as a real estate associate also reflected concerns surrounding power dynamics in the following excerpt:

“I kind of came in knowing that it was going to be where it is, it's not, you know, a super high salary. It's almost half of what I was making before. But that was just that wasn't the reason I wanted to do it. I entered into this position, knowing what it could be in the future...Typically in this industry, actually, a lot of people don't have that opportunity [to get a base salary]. It goes to straight commission, which is which is difficult for people our age...And maybe this is more of just the perception of like, hey, I'm just happy to have a job. I'm younger. I maybe didn't

feel comfortable even thinking about negotiating...And, you know, I didn't join it for a specific salary right now. It's more like what this could produce in the future.”

As with the former respondent and several other junior respondents, he articulated the sentiment of just being “happy to have a job.” Both also referred to their youth and how they felt they did not have the power or authority to negotiate. Similarly, other junior respondents reported deciding to not negotiate or to negotiate less aggressively than they might have otherwise because they felt as though they could not afford the risk. However, the language the junior female respondent and junior male respondent used in describing their decisions not to negotiate do differ slightly. While the former focused concerns surrounding credentials and work experience—even saying she was “desperate” for a job—the latter reached part his decision not to negotiate on slightly different grounds. He focused less on the fear of not being qualified enough and more on industry norms, long-term career prospects and goals, and how the relevant power dynamics played into those. This comparison reflects the literature’s theory that women are likely to feel more disenfranchised than men when it comes to negotiating (Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-75).

The other area in which junior respondents were coded at a significantly higher rate than senior respondents was with an ethical approach to negotiation. While junior respondents exhibited this trait 71% (5/7) of the time, senior respondents only did so 39% (5/13) of the time. 80% (4/5) of junior women, 63% (5/8) of senior women, 50% (1/2) of junior men, and no (0/7) senior men demonstrated this approach. This indicates that those most likely to value ethics, fairness, and merit in negotiations are, once again, young women. One way in which this manifested was in respondents’ choosing not to negotiate because they felt the offer was fair, as opposed to perhaps seeing how much more they could get by negotiating. It also manifested in

the approach respondents took to their negotiations, meaning that they might have aimed for what they felt was merited as opposed to what the highest range could be, or that they alluded to concepts of fairness and merit when negotiating.

On the other hand, 92% (12/13) of senior respondents as opposed to 29% (2/7) of junior respondents practiced transparency and directness. Senior respondents were also coded for both confidence and the ability to walk away from a negotiation at rates of 54% (7/13) as opposed to junior respondents' 14% (1/7) for both. This data would suggest that as respondents gained more experience in the workforce and, presumably, negotiating, they gained confidence and became more comfortable with setting and enforcing clear expectations when discussing compensation.

Additionally, senior respondents were significantly more likely to report using a fact-based/analytical approach when engaging in salary negotiations than junior respondents, with a 26% gap between the two demographics (9/13 senior respondents, 3/7 junior respondents). Senior respondents were also 10% (5/13 senior respondents, 2/7 junior respondents) more likely to ground negotiations in specific performance indicators than junior respondents. This data suggests that increased experience working and negotiating has given these respondents more information than their junior counterparts and has taught them the value of basing their cases on concrete facts—whether they be market data or performance benchmarks.

Finally, senior respondents were shown to exercise a reasonable/understanding approach 40% more often than junior respondents (7/13 senior respondents, 1/7 junior respondents), meaning they were frequently made efforts to understand the party with whom they were negotiating and tailored their asks appropriately. Furthermore, it was only senior respondents who reported valuing honesty—defined as being open about both strengths and weaknesses—when negotiating on their own behalf, and it was only senior respondents who reported tailoring

their approaches to the party on the other side of the table. All this suggests that as individuals gain experience negotiating, and perhaps as they move into managerial positions that require them to hire employees of their own, they begin to value and exercise the softer, people-oriented skills more.

Experience of Negotiating Compensation

Hardest Part of Negotiating

The hardest part of negotiating that was observed the most in this study was having the confidence to execute a negotiation. 39% (5/13) of women and 14% (1/7) of men found it difficult to do so, suggesting that per the literature, men were more comfortable with the risks associated with entering into these negotiations (Schneider 2017, 701-2). On the other hand, 15% (2/13) of women as opposed to 29% (2/7) of men found the hardest part of negotiating to be getting all the information and understanding the other side, indicating that this was an area in which women excelled more than men.

There was no general consensus on the easiest part of negotiating, but an interesting finding was that 23% (3/13) of women did say that they found it easy to enter into negotiations when they felt prepared and had clear goals. This would suggest that in line with the literature on negotiating, preparation and being armed with solid information increase women's propensity to effectively negotiate (Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-78; Schneider 2017, 702-711).

Change over Time

Another element of negotiating that I studied was if and how senior respondents felt that their approaches to negotiation had changed with experience. The most common change over

time that respondents reported was increased confidence in themselves and their abilities, with 31% (4/13) of women and 29% (2/7) of men citing this. Other observed changes were increased adaptability depending on the opposing party, and an improved ability to be analytical and articulate; each of these two changes came in under 15% (3/20, 2/20), respectively. That the majority of senior respondents did observe an evolution in negotiation tactics over the course of their careers indicates that seniority served as an advantage in this study.

Networking

The literature I reviewed suggests that women in high-level, professional industries are often at a disadvantage when it comes to networking, in part due to the fact that these industries have historically been male-dominated. This could manifest in a range of ways, from different methods of preferred networking, to exclusion or “voluntary” opt out from networking opportunities (Phalen 2000, 231; Moore and Whitt 2008, 309; Bevelander and Page 2011, 624-5). My study found that networking played a role in respondents’ getting their jobs 40% (8/20) of the time, with 57% (4/7) of men reporting it and 30% (4/13) of women. This makes networking a salient factor in career attainment and in the hiring process when an individual is trying to take a new position.

Regarding networking styles, the most common method that women employed was a personal approach—meaning they actively focused on trying to foster personal connections and friendships to build a network. While 86% (12/14) of female respondents reported this, only 29% (2/7) of males did. A junior female respondent and financial analyst illustrates this personal style of networking and its value to her in the following quote:

“I just do interpersonal relationships. I do not have a Linked-In because I hate it. It honestly stressed me out [in college] just because of how uber competitive and aggressive people could be about touting their own experiences. I found that it was more rewarding when people found out that I was working at a cool place rather than me shoving it in everyone's face. So basically, just being willing to reach out to people. I went on a series of like coffee chats with people that I targeted as positions that I was interested in slash companies. But mainly from just interpersonal relationships and being willing and open to talk to people and hear and learn from their experiences.”

The above quote demonstrates this respondent's reasons for valuing a more personal method of networking, the primary of which was the rewarding nature interpersonal relationships as opposed to more superficial connections. The sentiment was mirrored in the majority of female respondents; though many individuals employed multiple types of networking methods, women such as this respondent nearly always made sure to include a personal touch because of the value they place on the people with whom they are networking. This confirmed existing research saying that women's networking strength lie in their ability to be social and personable with others (Moore and Whitt 2008, 309).

Another common method of networking included networking through work—71% (10/14) of women and 57% (4/7) of men. Alternatively, 36% (5/14) of women reported feeling excluded for networking opportunities or that they decided to opt out of networking opportunities due to their gender; no men reported this. Two senior female respondents—a hiring consultant and a financial services principal—specifically mentioned that in the past they had been excluded when male coworkers would go to strip clubs after work; a junior female

respondent who is employed as a law clerk shared a reported avoiding after-work happy hours with her company because a male coworker had a habit of making her uncomfortable. Another woman who is a chief financial officer reported specifically keeping up with college football so as to avoid exclusion by male coworkers and clients. These findings all aligned with the literature regarding the “boys’ club” feel of many historically male-dominated industries (Epstein et al. 1999, 14; MacDonald and Liff 2007, 128; Albiston 2010, 1122; Bevelander and Page 2011, 625). Furthermore, the findings demonstrate how women could find themselves in a position of decreased authority at their respective companies, not only potentially affecting women’s professional experiences in general, but also potentially affecting the way they see their ability to negotiate for themselves.

Parenthood

Generally speaking, though 60% (6/10) of parents reported that having a family affected their approaches to negotiation, there was no consensus on the effect had. Women demonstrated a higher likelihood than men did of factoring their roles as parents into the way they viewed their negotiations. There was an even split regarding whether it caused them to be more aggressive (if they felt they needed to provide more for their families) or less aggressive (if they felt they couldn’t risk losing this opportunity with a family for which to provide).

90% (9/10) respondents said that being a parent affected their career decisions overall. However, no consensus was reached on whether respondents found parenthood to be incentivizing or disincentivizing in their career moves, and there were no significant gender discrepancies in this data. In other words, some respondents found parenthood to be incentivizing in their career because they felt a responsibility to provide for their families

financially, while others found it to be disincentivizing because they wanted to spend more time with their children.

When employers considered the relationship they had observed between workers who were parents and their careers, two-thirds found parenthood to have a disincentivizing or limiting effect on their employees' careers. Though 38% (3/8) noticed this in both male and female employees, 88% (7/8) said that the most serious limiting effects were observed among female employees. A female chief people officer noted that though she frequently observed women taking a step back when they had children, there were also several incidences in which she noticed coworkers passing a mother over for career opportunities because they assumed she would not want or would not be able to handle those opportunities.

Employers' Views on Negotiation

Good Approaches to Negotiation

The best negotiation tactic as observed by 67% (8/12) of employers was coded as a “transparent/vulnerable” approach—meaning negotiators were honest not only about expectations, needs, and goals, but also about weaknesses and areas of improvement. Employers who valued this appreciated not only the ability to have open channels of communication, but also the way showing vulnerability builds trust in the prospective hire. This means that the approach employers liked to see from current and prospective employees generally aligned with the most common strategy respondents utilized when negotiating on their own behalf, with the exception of demonstrating vulnerability as that did not show up as a top approach for people negotiating for themselves. A male chief financial officer articulated why honesty and vulnerability were more important to him than he believed most candidates realized:

“And I do want to know their areas of development. And oftentimes people are worried about this area, thinking, ‘OK. I don't want to give them too much on the development areas because they'll see all my weaknesses and they won't hire me.’ That's not actually how I look at it. I want to understand their development areas for two reasons. One, I want to understand how those might impact their particular role and how I could help them best...And the other thing is really, if you're going to know someone and know their ability to be candid, then when they are pretty forthcoming with those sorts of things, they tend to go up the trustworthy and credibility meter higher.”

This excerpt demonstrates why a transparent and vulnerable approach was so appealing for this employer to see in candidates. The first reason was the somewhat expected practical matter of making sure the candidate was a good fit by ensuring that their areas of improvement would not be debilitating, but rather might even be areas with which the employer could be of assistance. However, the less obvious reason for valuing transparency and vulnerability was that this employer, like several others in the sample, views a negotiation as the start of a relationship. In other words, he wanted to know this was someone he as a boss could trust not only to get the job done, but also to communicate when they needed help. Additionally, as demonstrated by the sentiments in this interview excerpt, if you are working with someone every day, it is a lot easier when there is genuine trust and open communication.

Another tactic employers liked to see was a fact-based/rational approach, as listed by 58% (7/12). This means that negotiators were logical in making their case, were prepared with solid facts such as market rates and company policies, and they demonstrated a propensity being reasonable based on the limitations of the other side.

Additionally, 50% (6/12) of employers reported appreciating a confident/articulate approach—in which negotiators exuded confidence and were able to articulate their case clearly. A final notable approach viewed favorably in the study was a performance-based/articulate approach—in which negotiators grounded their cases in clearly articulated, specific performance indicators—as reported by 42% (5/12) of employers.

Promising for women is that transparency, reasonableness, logic and facts, and performance-based styles of negotiating were all commonly observed in female respondents' interviews. However, male respondents who were asked about their experiences negotiating for themselves did excel more than their female counterparts in the fact-based/analytical approach. Additionally, 92% (11/12) of employers noted observing some degree of gender discrepancies in the workplace, the most common of which was a discrepancy in assertiveness and confidence between the genders. A female chief executive officer neatly tied this to levels of success in negotiating when she pointed out that the employee who feels comfortable making his case for a raise or promotion frequently is more likely to get one during review season than the employee who does not do so; she also said that in all her time working as CEO of her software company, she had never once had a woman do that.

Bad Approaches to Negotiation

The least effective negotiation practices as observed by employers were an overly aggressive approach (50%, 6/12), an unfounded or uninformed approach (42%, 5/12), and an approach based on personal reasons and emotions (33%, 4/12). What is interesting is that the least popular approach—being overly aggressive—seems to lean more towards the stereotypically male styles based on the literature than towards the stereotypically female styles

(Johnson 2016, 139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-73; Schneider 2017, 704-706). The unfounded or uninformed approach serves as a foil to the favored approach of grounding negotiations in facts and logic, which was one of the most common approaches observed in both male and female respondents. However, with men practicing a fact-based and analytical approach 17% more often than women did, the data would suggest the particular approach of not having a solid foundation for an ask is an area in which female respondents may have more room for improvement than their male counterparts. Finally, the disfavored approach of grounding negotiations in personal reasons and emotions did not appear as a trend among male or female respondents' approaches to negotiation—a promising finding for both genders.

Employers' Views on Successful People

One of the last questions I asked employers was what traits they felt set apart professionals who experienced exceptional success in their careers from everyone else. The most common traits were coded as being entrepreneurial, intelligent, and a people person. Entrepreneurial individuals were those identified as inquisitive, hardworking, and driven. Intelligent candidates were those who had knowledge and skills, and the wisdom to exercise good judgement. People persons were those who demonstrated emotional intelligence and were team oriented. All of these traits were listed by 50% (6/12) of employers (several respondents listed more than one trait for this question). 42% (5/12) of employers also listed the value of being confident and articulate, as this lends itself to gaining people's trust and respect. All of these successful traits imply a relatively equal split among the genders: the literature suggests the the first two traits—being entrepreneurial and intelligent—are largely gender neutral, and the last

two—being a people person and exhibiting confidence—favor women and men, respectively (Johnson 2016, 139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-78; Schneider 2017, 704-706).

Conclusion

It is difficult to say the precise role negotiation plays in the gender pay gap, particularly as my study does not pull data on salaries and other concrete, numerical factors that would serve as objective benchmarks. However, this study was not intended to measure individuals' rates of successful negotiation. It was intended to explore individuals' experiences negotiating and the circumstances surrounding those experiences to illuminate trends in gender, seniority, and negotiation. In doing so, I demonstrate the ways in which these variables tie into the broader literatures on negotiation, workplace culture, and the gender pay gap.

My study reveals that female respondents negotiated compensation packages 25% less often the men did, confirming that at least among my respondents, there was indeed a gap in the rates with which men and women negotiated compensation. Female respondents often based their decision whether or not to negotiate and their negotiation tactics not only on principles of merit and empathy, but also on power dynamics. This means that in situations in which women felt they had less agency or power, they were less likely to negotiate, and if they did negotiate, they were less likely to negotiate as aggressively as their male counterparts might have.

The findings indicate that while men and women did exhibit some overlapping approaches to negotiation—including but not limited to valuing transparency, directness, reasonability, and understanding—there was indeed a divergence in tactics between male and female respondents. In accordance with the literature on negotiation, women in my study

typically embodied more ethical, more empathetic, and less aggressive approaches than men did. Additionally, although women demonstrated high rates of fact-based and analytical approaches, men were more likely to exercise this tactic.

Seniority was also relevant in negotiation decisions, with senior respondents negotiating compensation packages twice as often as junior respondents. Power dynamics were found to be one of the most relevant factors for junior respondents' decision to negotiate; and senior respondents were found to be more comfortable negotiating—demonstrated by their high levels of transparency, directness, and confidence—than their junior counterparts. Looking at the intersection of gender and seniority, it is hardly surprising that the demographics negotiating compensation at the highest and lowest rates were senior male respondents and junior female respondents, respectively.

Although this data alone does not prove whether or not negotiation is unequivocally a factor in the gender pay gap, it makes a strong case for it. If it is already agreed upon in the literature that men are more successful negotiators on average than women, and if my study shows that there were in fact differences in men's and women's negotiations, then it stands to reason that women's approaches to negotiation are relevant to at least a small aspect of the gender pay gap (Gerhart and Rynes 1989, 13; Marks and Harold 2011, 387; Johnson 2016, 133; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 74; Leibbrandt and List 2015, 2017; Schneider 2017, 705-6; Anisman-Razin et al. 2018, 634).

Compensation negotiations do not happen in a vacuum, nor do the strategies women develop in preparation for such negotiations. It is unclear how much of the negotiation gap is reflective of the differences in men's and women's approaches, as well as if the negotiation approaches more common among women might be less effective. Similarly, this study cannot

conclude how much of the gap could be reflective of backlash women might face from breaking socialized gender norms when they adopt approaches more common among men. There is simply not enough data, particularly because this study did not measure respondents' salaries or other numerical data from their compensation negotiations. What is conclusive is that, within my sample, there were discrepancies in men's and women's negotiations and workplace experiences and that more research in this area is warranted.

I believe the next step in academia is to build on the current research regarding negotiation and the gender pay gap. One way to do so would be to study the success rates of various negotiation approaches among men and women with objective markers like salary attained as compared to market rates and coworkers' salaries, among other things.

Moving forward in the professional world, I feel that one simple action employers could take to cut down on the negotiation gap would be to state when compensation is negotiable. Not one respondent of my study reported that they were told that their compensation packages were negotiable. Though there are practical reasons for this as employers often want to get the best deal possible for their company, stating negotiability could amount to a significant social benefit, reducing the negotiation gap and making a dent in the gender pay gap (Leibbrandt and List 2015, 2017).

Based on the findings of this study, I also think it would be advantageous to implement training programs for negotiating. All the approaches observed in my study are teachable, and research shows that when women are coached in negotiating, they increase their rates of success (Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-78; Schneider 2017, 702-711). While I believe there should be female-specific negotiation training due to the differences observed between the genders, not only in my study but also in several others, I believe that men and women could both benefit

from intersectional negotiation training (Gerhart and Rynes 1989, 13; Marks and Harold 2011, 387; Johnson 2016, 133-139; Kray and Kennedy 2017, 72-83; Schneider 2017, 704-706 Anisman-Razin et al. 2018, 634). Ultimately, the goal should be to reach a point when there is no gap in men's and women's rates of negotiation, nor in their rates of success. By offering intersectional and interdisciplinary negotiation training to all people, and by teaching the value of multiple negotiation approaches, perhaps one day we will see a world in which further studies on gender and negotiation are obsolete.

Appendix A

Interview Questions: Negotiating for Self

JOB CHARACTERISTICS

- Tell me about your current job and how you got it.
 - How long have you been with this company?
 - What is your position/title?
 - How long have you held this position?
 - Tell me about the environment at this workplace.

NEGOTIATION

- Tell me about what happened when you received an offer.
 - Were you asked about your salary history?
 - Were you initially happy with the offer?
 - Did you try to negotiate in any way or did you accept the offer as is?
 - If you negotiated:
 - Why?
 - How?
 - How did you feel/were you satisfied/etc.?
 - Who made the first suggestion about compensation during negotiations?
 - How did this affect your strategy?
 - Who was on the other side of the table?

- Did this affect your decision to/not to negotiate, or your strategy?
- Did they say anything regarding whether or not compensation was negotiable?
 - Did this affect your decision or approach?
- What is the hardest thing about negotiating?
- What is the easiest?
- How would you describe your negotiation style?
 - Examples?
- Do you have a mentor, or did anyone advise you on whether/how to negotiate?
 - Can you tell me about that person's role?
 - What did they tell you?
- If you did not negotiate:
 - Why not?
 - Who was on the other side of the table?
 - Did this affect your decision to/not to negotiate, or your strategy?
 - Did you find it hard to negotiate?
 - Did they say anything regarding whether or not compensation was negotiable?
 - Did this affect your decision or approach?
 - Do you think negotiating would have given you a better result?

- Do you have a mentor, or did anyone advise you on whether to negotiate?
 - Can you tell me about that person's role?
 - What did they tell you?
- How would you define a successful negotiation?
- Do you think any of your coworkers negotiated compensation?
 - How do you think culture plays into people's decisions to negotiate here?
 - Is it a generally supportive environment?
- Do you have children or are you planning to have children?
 - If so, did being a parent (or planning to become a parent) ever affect your decision about whether or not to negotiate for a job, raise, or promotion (or any other career decisions)?
 - If so, how and why?
- For more senior workers only:
 - Can you tell me of a time a salary negotiation went particularly well?
 - What do you think made it so good?
 - Can you tell me of a time a salary negotiation went poorly?
 - What do you think factored into that?
- For more senior workers only:
 - Has your style of negotiating changed at all as you gained experience in the workplace?
 - If so, how?

- Are you more/less/equally likely to attempt negotiation compared to when you first began working?

BONUS QUESTIONS

- How did you develop your professional network?
 - What are your primary networking methods)?
 - Have you ever felt there was a networking opportunity you were not able to take advantage of?
 - If so, could you tell me about it?
- For women only:
 - Have you read anything on women in the workplace or negotiation?
 - Has this affected the way you view your situation?
 - If so, how?
- Is there anything else you would like to share that I haven't covered?
- Are there any other questions you feel I should have asked?

Appendix B

Interview Questions: Hiring/Recruiting

- How long have you been recruiting/interviewing/hiring employees?
- Could me about the environment at this workplace/how would you describe the workplace culture here?
- For those who have worked at multiple companies:
 - Have you found that the culture at each place affected your interviewees' approaches to negotiations/interviews/promotions?
 - Examples?
- Do you ask about salary history during negotiations?
 - If so, how much do you weight this?
- What strategies have you found to more effective for negotiating in general for your interviewees?
 - Have these changed depending on the individual characteristics from one person to the next?
 - Examples/stories?
- What strategies have you found to be ineffective or even detrimental in negotiations for your interviewees?
 - Examples/stories?
- Have you noticed a difference in the way men and women approach negotiations over compensation/promotions?
 - Examples?

- What have you found to be successful/detrimental to each?
- Have you ever noticed anyone limiting themselves career-wise due to having children or the potential of becoming a parent?
 - If so, tell me about it.
- Have you kept in touch with the people you've recruited/hired/interviewed?
 - For those who seem to be doing particularly well in their careers, did you notice a difference in their behavior, networking, or interview and negotiation style, as opposed to those who have not gone as far?
 - If so, what and why?
- Is there anything else you would like to share that I haven't covered?
- Are there any other questions you feel I should have asked?

Appendix C

Interview Profiles

- Respondent #1: Investor, Entrepreneur | virtual | 25 minutes
- Respondent #2: Chief Financial Officer | virtual | 20 minutes
- Respondent #3: Financial Advisor | virtual | 10 minutes
- Respondent #4: Chief Financial Officer | virtual | 42 minutes
- Respondent #5: Law Clerk | in person | 37 minutes
- Respondent #6: Chief People Officer | virtual | 22 minutes
- Respondent #7: Firmwide Coordinator | in person | 43 minutes
- Respondent #8: Chief Operating Officer | virtual | 31 minutes
- Respondent #9: Legal Assistant | virtual | 9 minutes
- Respondent #10: Chief Financial Officer | in person | 56 minutes
- Respondent #11: Contracts Assistant | virtual | 20 minutes
- Respondent #12: General Counsel | virtual | 28 minutes
- Respondent #13: General Counsel | in person | 32 minutes
- Respondent #14: Corporate Case Assistant | in person | 28 minutes
- Respondent #15: Real Estate Associate | virtual | 22 minutes
- Respondent #16: Chief People Officer | virtual | 23 minutes
- Respondent #17: Hiring Consultant | virtual | 22 minutes
- Respondent #18: Financial Analyst | virtual | 24 minutes
- Respondent #19: Chief Accounting Officer | virtual | 26 minutes
- Respondent #20: Financial Services Partner | in person | 25 minutes

- Respondent #21: Financial Services Principal | virtual | 54 minutes
- Respondent #22: Chief Executive Officer | virtual | 25 minutes

Appendix D**A Note on Statistical Findings**

For the statistics in my study, I would like to acknowledge that many of the fractions comprising the percentages have different denominators. This is because I did not necessarily have answers to every question from every respondent. Frequently this was due to time constraints, and I was reluctant to cut off their stories that were filled with rich experiences and data. Therefore, in such cases I would focus on the questions that seemed most relevant to the respondent's experiences based on what what we had covered thus far.

Appendix E

Methodological Appendix Part 1

Negotiation Approaches and Factors: How They Were Coded

Ability to walk: Respondent demonstrated the ability to walk from a negotiation or job offer as an important element in their approach to negotiating.

Adaptable approach: Respondent demonstrated that they adapted their negotiation tactics based on who was on the other side of the table.

Assertive approach: Respondent demonstrated assertiveness in their negotiation style, whether by demanding as opposed to asking, drawing their figurative line in the sand, etc.

Confident approach: Respondent demonstrated confidence in themselves and in their arguments when negotiating compensation.

Ethical approach: Respondent demonstrated an affinity for fairness; this manifested in frequently less aggressive negotiating or no negotiating at all due to not wanting to take more than what they felt was fair.

Fact-based/analytical approach: Respondent demonstrated an approach to compensation negotiations grounded in concrete facts such as market data and industry standards, as well as hard logic.

Honest approach: Respondent demonstrated honesty in communicating their expectations, concerns, strengths, and/or weaknesses.

Performance-based approach: Respondent demonstrated a negotiation style based on using job performance as evidence for their case.

Power dynamics: Respondent demonstrated an awareness and/or concern for relevant power dynamics; this manifested in frequently less aggressive negotiating or no negotiating at all due to a perceived lack of power.

Reasonable/understanding approach: Respondent demonstrated a propensity for trying to understand the other side's situation and being reasonable in their objectives accordingly.

Transparent/direct approach: Respondent demonstrated an approach that was straightforward with expectations, needs, goals, and relevant reasons.

Appendix F

Methodological Appendix Part 2

Employers' Observed Negotiation Approaches: How They Were Coded

Confident/articulate approach: Employer observed negotiators who exuded confidence in themselves and their arguments and who were articulate in expressing such.

Fact-based/rational approach: Employer observed negotiators who grounded their requests in hard facts such as market data and industry standards and who were rational in their negotiations accordingly.

Overly aggressive approach: Employer observed negotiators who were excessively aggressive and demanding in their negotiations and who made little effort to compromise.

Performance-based/articulate approach: Employer observed negotiators who grounded their negotiations on job performance and clearly articulated such.

Personal reasons/emotional approach: Employer observed negotiators who based requests on personal reasons and who displayed emotion in their negotiating.

Transparent/vulnerable approach: Employer observed negotiators who were open with expectations, needs, and goals, as well as weaknesses and other vulnerabilities.

Unfounded/uninformed approach: Employer observed negotiators who had no basis for their requests or who were misinformed with their requests.

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