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Gender in Job Negotiations: A Two-Level Game

by Hannah Riley Bowles and Kathleen McGinn

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About the Author



Kathleen L. McGinn
Negotiation,
Organizations &
Markets

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Abstract

We propose taking a two-level-game perspective on gender in job negotiations. At Level One, candidates negotiate with employers. At Level Two, candidates negotiate with household members. In order to illuminate the interplay between these two levels, we review research from two separate bodies of literature. Research in psychology and organizational behavior on candidate-employer negotiations sheds light on the effects of gender on Level One negotiations. Research from economics and sociology on intrahousehold bargaining elucidates how negotiations over the allocation of domestic labor at Level Two influence labor force participation at Level One. In conclusion, we integrate practical implications from these two bodies of literature to propose a set of prescriptive suggestions for candidates to approach job negotiations as a two-level game and to minimize the disadvantageous effects of gender on job negotiation outcomes.

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Contact

Division of Faculty & Research

Harvard Business School
Soldiers Field
Boston, MA 02163
infoservices@hbs.edu

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