MASTERTHESIS: GENDER INFLUENCE ON PATTERNS OF STRATEGIC ADAPTABILITY IN DYADIC NEGOTIATION

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Date of submission: 22-01-2025
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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to evaluate the gender differences between men and women in terms of how they adapt their negotiation strategies in dyadic negotiations. To evaluate this, the novel strategic adaptability framework proposed by Heunis et al. (2024) was used in this study. They define 'strategic adaptability' as a negotiator's reaction to a cue that leads to shifting from an integrative to a distributive strategy or vice versa.

Design/Methodology – This study used a quantitative research design to explore the influence of gender on an individual's ability to adapt negotiation strategies. The main source of data was transcripts of negotiations, and content analysis was used to extract meaningful insights from these transcripts.

Findings – The author found that the gender characteristic of a negotiator does not directly influence their patterns of strategic adaptability. This difference was tested across multiple scenarios. There were visible and significant differences in adaptability patterns between males and females when negotiating with opponents who dominantly used an integrative negotiation strategy. Further investigating the effect of the opponent's behaviour resulted in a significant difference between men and women in the way they directly follow their opponent's strategic shift. More specifically, men decrease the frequency of directly following their opponent's strategic shifts when the opponent gets increasingly more integrative.

Originality/value – The findings of this study provide some valuable insights into gender differences in strategic adaptability. In addition, this study extends the theoretical reach of the strategic adaptability framework by Heunis et al. (2024). It proposes future research opportunities that include an alternative strategic adaptability coding scheme, non-binary gender inclusion, and larger sample size to enhance generalisability and external validity.

Keywords – Strategic adaptability, Gender differences, Negotiation strategy, Negotiation process

Paper type – Research paper

Content

1. Introduction

Negotiating is a strategic discussion where two or more independent parties attempt to resolve their opposing interest (Lewicki et al., 2016). This process is a complex and fundamental aspect of human interaction, involving different communication styles that can influence the dynamics and outcome of the negotiation (Lewicki et al., 2016). Communication styles such as competitive, cooperative, assertive, or accommodating affect the dynamics and outcomes of negotiations. The way these communication styles are used differs for each negotiator, as the individual's characteristics moderate this (Brett, 2014; Giles & Ogay, 2007). One of these characteristics is the individual's gender.

An individual's gender is based on their biological sex (chromosome configuration), self-given gender identity (the gender someone identifies with) and gender expression (how someone expresses their gender to society) (Halpern, 2000; Miller & Halpern, 2014). Gender differences in communication and negotiation have been widely studied before. Walters et al. (1998) researched gender and communication styles and found that men and women exhibit different communication styles. Specifically, men are found to adopt a more assertive and competitive communication style as a strategy. Women on the other hand generally more often choose a cooperative and accommodating strategy (Mazei et al., 2015).

Despite current views of acknowledging gender identities other than male/female, existing relevant literature about gender differences in negotiation has not gone beyond the binary spectrum derived from an individual's biological sex yet. As this study continues the existing literature, individuals referred to as males thus have ordinary masculine traits and females have ordinary feminine traits in combination with matching cognition. This covers most individuals and therefore generalises the results of this study.

Real-life (multi-issue) negotiations are highly dynamic. Hence, the ability to adapt communication styles is crucial for achieving optimal results. Recent research by Heunis et al. (2024) dove deeper into adaptations and communication styles within dyadic negotiations. They define strategic adaptation as a reaction to a cue that leads to a shift in strategy and communication style. In specific, a strategic adaptation is caused by external factors, a deadlock situation, the priority of the issue under discussion, new information or the need to understand or follow the opponent's adaptation. The theory of strategic adaptability and the matching framework will be further explained in the following chapter.

Although extensive research has already been conducted on negotiation, some limitations could be addressed. Previous studies mainly focused on the static deployment of communication styles without switching between styles (Bowles & Flynn, 2010; DeRue et al., 2009; Mazei et al., 2015). Other research was focused on the negotiator's reaction in certain situations (DeRue et al., 2009; Druckman & Olekalns, 2011; Holmes, 1992; Olekalns & Weingart, 2008). Finally, Heunis et al. (2024) proposed a novel framework for strategic adaptability but also mentioned novelty as one of their limitations. They also note that further research should be conducted about potential individual conditions and characteristics that influence the ability to adapt.

Understanding how the gender of a negotiator influences strategic adaptability is different to previous research as it focuses on the switch between strategies rather than the deployment of a strategy. This study can provide valuable insights into effective negotiating practices, as negotiators could tailor their approach for an optimal result. In addition, understanding gender differences in strategic adaptability could enhance team dynamics when negotiating as a team,

which could lead to enhanced decision-making. Organisations could also benefit from these insights when developing effective negotiation training programs. They could tailor negotiator training programs to the individual's strongest cognitive traits, which are the negotiator's sources of power among their emotional intelligence, patience and pragmatism according to Lewicki et al. (2016).

Therefore, this study aims to address the research gap about the influence of gender on the ability to adapt different negotiation strategies within dyadic negotiations. The following research question was formulated to provide insights:

How does a negotiator's gender influence adaptability patterns, and how do reactions to adaptability cues differ for both genders?

Five hypotheses were assessed using statistical analysis on negotiation transcripts to answer the research question at hand.

First, there was no significant difference in the overall number of adaptations between men and women in dyadic negotiations (H1). This indicated that the gender alone of the negotiator does not influence adaptability patterns. The second finding was significant at the 10% level and suggested that women demonstrated a higher number of adaptations compared to men when negotiating with a dominantly integrative opponent. This was contradicting to the aforethought hypothesis (H2) of women being less likely to adapt when their opponent dominantly uses an integrative negotiation strategy. This effect disappeared when negotiating with an opponent who dominantly used a distributive negotiation strategy (H3). The fourth finding was that the gender of the opponent did not solely affect the number of adaptations made by a negotiator (H4). However, an additional post-hoc exploratory test that included the opponent's strategic behaviour was found to be significant for males. In specific, the male adaptation ratio decreases when their female opponent becomes more integrative. This effect is contrariwise but still negative when males negotiate with a male opponent who becomes more integrative. The fifth finding suggested that there is no immediate difference between men and women in the way they directly follow their opponent's strategic adaptation (H5). However, a second additional post-hoc exploratory test suggested that male negotiators were less likely to directly follow their opponent's strategic adaptation when the opponent becomes more integrative. This pattern was not observed for female negotiators.

The findings suggest that the gender of a negotiator is not primarily determinant of their strategic adaptability patterns. However, incorporating different contextual factors such as their opponent's gender or strategic behaviour resulted in some gender-specific patterns. While women showed more adaptations when negotiating with a dominantly integrative opponent, men showed a decrease in directly following their opponent's strategic adaptation as their opponent became more integrative. Furthermore, this research contributes to the literature about negotiation by expanding the framework of strategic adaptability and highlighting the importance of contextual factors beyond the gender characteristics of the negotiators.

Lastly, this research faced three limitations. The coding scheme did not capture all the adaptation contexts, which led to some data becoming unusable. Second, this study exclusively focuses on binary genders, which overlooks non-binary specific adaptability patterns. Third, the sample size was limited due missing gender characteristics, which affected the generalizability and external validity. Future research should address these limitations.

2. Theory

2.1 Strategic Adaptability

Depending on the goal of the negotiation, two dominant strategies can be distinguished. Distributive negotiations seek maximum output, this is often a win/lose scenario where one party gets a better deal than their opponent. This type of negotiation often leads to one dissatisfied party. Integrative negotiations seek maximum output for both parties, more like a win/win scenario. This type of negotiation may not result in the best outcome for one party, but both parties are often satisfied with the results (Hawes & Fleming, 2014).

Negotiations are highly dynamic, especially when they encompass multiple issues. Hence, using only one of the two strategies will result in low or no outcome. To address this, negotiators are required to adapt their strategies based on both the priority and feasibility of the issue and therefore need to find the balance between a distributive and integrative strategy (Walton et al., 2000). To effectively use such a mixed strategy approach, negotiators should be not only able to apply the two strategies but also be able to strategically switch between them and recognize when they should do so. In essence, Heunis et al. (2024) defined *strategic adaptability* as the negotiator's ability to react to an informational cue by changing their strategy, and created a strategic adaptability framework on the following literature.

Transitioning from one strategy to another is done on so-called *turning points* (Druckman & Olekalns, 2011). When negotiating, turning points are transitions from integrative to distributive, and vice versa. Turning points in negotiations can be categorised into one external event and two internal events which lead to turning strategy. External turning points are for example a third party who engages in the negotiation or a policy/leadership change (Crump & Druckman, 2012). These external events from the outside the negotiation influence the *context* of the negotiation as well as the negotiator's perception and priority. Hence, external events can influence a negotiator to adapt their strategy (Heunis et al., 2024).

Internal turning points can be divided into two different categories. First, *process* cues during the negotiation can trigger negotiators to adapt their strategy in situations where they feel stuck (e.g., both negotiators do not want to budge). Such a situation is called a deadlock and negotiators can adapt their strategy to keep the negotiation moving forward (Druckman, 2001). Second, substantive internal cues about *content* can trigger a negotiator to adapt their strategy. Substantive cues refer to information which reframes the issue under discussion and therefore changes prioritization. In addition, substantive cues refer to new information which causes negotiators to change their views and prioritization about a topic and therefore adapt strategies (Druckman & Olekalns, 2013). Negotiators are more likely to use a distributive strategy for objectives with high prioritization. On the other hand, negotiators who prioritize social goals are more likely to use an integrative strategy (Walton et al., 2000).

Further research conducted by Olekalns et al. (2003) on stages in negotiations identified that negotiators use different strategies in the beginning, middle and end stages. Another research by Olekalns and Weingart (2008) focussed more on the total duration of the negotiation. They identified 'strategic sequence' which is the aggregation of strategic approaches and responses in the negotiation process. Olekalns et al. (2003) define a phase in a negotiation as a consistent period of coherent patterns of behaviours called episodic models.

For example, an adaptation in strategy by an opponent could trigger a negotiator to adapt strategies as well. The research towards episodic models suggests that there are three strategic sequences which initiate a negotiator to redirect or keep maintaining their negotiation strategy and behaviour (Donohue et al., 1984; Olekalns & Smith, 2000; Putnam & Jones, 1982). First, reciprocal sequences refer to aligning behaviour with each other. This can happen when a negotiator directly follows their opponent's strategic adaptation by aligning their own strategy. Second, complementary sequences refer to responding with a different behaviour that still fits the overall strategy that is being used. For example, this can happen when a negotiator reacts with an accommodating cue to a collaborative cue from the opponent (both integrative). Third, transformational sequences refer to shifting from an integrative to a distributive strategy, and the other way around. These three sequences are all initiated by the *opponent* and create an opportunity for negotiators to adapt their strategy (Heunis et al., 2024).

Strategic adaptation doesn't always happen intentionally and consciously, as some shifts in strategy are natural reactions to cues. Heunis et al. (2024) proposed a novel framework for strategic adaptability based on the mentioned context, process, content, and opponent in negotiation. Their framework encompasses the seven categories (i.e., reactions) leading to a shift in strategy:

Table 1: Strategic adaptability framework in negotiation (Heunis et al. 2024, p. 9)

	Category	Explanation
Context	Adapt to external factors	Adapting strategy after external factors (e.g., policy changes)
Process	Adapt to deadlock	Adapting strategy after being stuck in the negotiation strategy (e.g., both don't want to budge)
Content	Adapt to priority of issue under discussion	Adapting the strategy based on the priority of the issue (e.g., caring less about shipment than price)
	Adapt to new information on issue	Adapting the strategy to new contextual information (e.g., new shipment regulations force negotiators to be collaborative)
Opponent	Follow adaptation by opponent	Following the strategy of the opponent (e.g., if one is willing to… then the other will too)
	Delayed adaptation to opponent	Delay in following the strategy of the opponent (e.g., switch strategy later)
	Adapt to understand opponent	Adapting the strategy to understand the opponent's interests (e.g., active listening)

To make adaptations and be mentally able to switch between different strategies, cognitive flexibility is a crucial characteristic of a negotiator. Cognitive flexibility is the mental ability to switch between different tasks, concepts, points of view and ways of thinking. This allows individuals to adapt both behaviour and thinking in response to changing situations, environments and perspectives (Tong et al., 2024; Uddin, 2021). Scott (1962) found that high cognitive flexibility results in better adaptivity and creativity when circumstances change. In addition, cognitive flexibility was found to be impaired with stress. This means that individuals are less able to adapt behaviour and thinking in stressful situations (Wang et al., 2022). In the context of this research, this impairing has a stronger effect on men than on women (Shields et al., 2016).

To summarise, negotiations are dynamic processes in which negotiators are required to incorporate strategic adaptability. Where strategic adaptability is defined as "a reaction to an informational cue, requiring change from a more distributive strategy to a more integrative strategy, or vice versa (Heunis et al., 2024, p. 3)"

Although several gaps emerge through the literature review, only one is relevant for this research. There is limited research on gender differences in adaptability patterns. Some studies focus on different communication styles among males and females, but there is limited research on how gender influences strategic adaptability in negotiation. Communication styles and strategic adaptability are closely related because effective communication is essential for adapting strategies (Mazei et al., 2015). The following chapter reviews the literature on communication styles and gender.

2.2 Gender

The way people communicate differs based on their characteristics, the other person in the dialogue and the context of the dialogue (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The opponent and context part are covered in the previous section. The remaining part about personal characteristics is covered in this chapter. Characteristics are typical or noticeable features of someone or something (e.g., curly hair, skin colour and gender). As mentioned before, a person's gender is a complex mix of their biological sex, self-given gender identity and gender expression. However, since existing literature about negotiation only used binary biological sex as a gender characteristic, this study will continue to investigate negotiation differences between men and women.

As mentioned before, individuals referred to as males have ordinary masculine traits and females have ordinary feminine traits in combination with matching cognitive abilities. It is important to acknowledge that an individual's traits and cognitive abilities are not primarily formed by their biological sex, but also by the gender stereotypes imposed by society and cultural influences (Halpern, 2000; Miller & Halpern, 2014). These stereotypes and cultural influences differ for everyone and thus were generalized based on traditional gender stereotypes and no cultural influences. Gender stereotypes are characterized by agency and communion. Where men are typically rated higher on agency, and women are typically rated higher on communion. Agency is focused on the individual and encompasses traits such as independence, instrumentality and competence. Communion on the other hand is focused on collectivism and incorporates expressivity, concern for the welfare of others and warmth (Deaux & Lewis, 1983; Haines et al., 2016). From here on in this study, men are assumed to fit the individual-focused agency stereotype, and women are assumed to fit the collectivism-focused communion stereotype as this generally fits most individuals.

Starting with differences between men and women in the type of verbal communication. For instance, women tend to use a more collaborative communication style through inclusive language, unlike men who generally use a more competitive language (Walters et al., 1998). Research conducted by both Babcock et al. (2013), and Mazei et al. (2015) suggested that women are more flexible as they often ask open questions, are more likely to listen actively and more willing to accommodate information for a collaborative outcome. They also found that women more often prioritise relationship-building and mutual satisfaction. Men on the other hand are found to be more likely to use an assertive approach with a focus on achieving their own goals.

Another important part of communication is emotional expression. Expressing emotions during negotiations can be both advantageous and disadvantageous. Although it can build trust, it may also be perceived as a person's weakness. Women are generally more expressive of their emotions in comparison to men (Fischer & Manstead, 2000). This does not directly mean that men exceed women in negotiating. Women are, in addition to being more expressive of their emotions, also found to be twice as likely to experience anxiety than males (Bahrami & Yousefi, 2011). Brooks and Schweitzer (2011) studied the influence of anxiety on negotiation dynamics and found that anxiety can be triggered by situations which lead to undesirable outcomes. They found that people want to get out of a situation which triggers anxiety. Hence, nervous negotiators are found to be more likely to make a low first offer, exit early and overall earn less profit.

The ability to react to cues in a negotiation is a key component of strategic adaptability. As mentioned before, women more often listen actively and therefore are more likely to pick up subtle cues and adjust their strategy. Men focus more on obvious cues and direct information, resulting in fewer total cues picked up, and creating fewer opportunities for strategic adaptation. Bowles and Flynn (2010) researched whether the gender of the opponent affects the adaptability of a negotiator. They found that women are more likely to adapt their strategy than men when negotiating with a 'naysayer'. Their findings were based on a dyadic negotiation where the gender of different 'naysaying' counterparts switched between male and female "(i.e., the gender of a negotiating counterpart who is refusing to make asked-for concessions) (Bowles & Flynn, 2010, p. 769)".

Lastly, the context of the negotiation can also affect the way men and women negotiate. Past research on gender and negotiation shows that men and women exceed each other, depending on the situation and main goal. Babcock et al. (2013) found that women get more nervous than men after the initiation of a negotiation. Also, men are found to slightly exceed women in distributive negotiations (Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999). On the other hand, women slightly exceed men when negotiating on behalf of others (Bowles et al., 2005). Furthermore, a negotiator's expectation about stereotypes and negotiation success is found to be different for men and women. Women exceeded men when they were told that feminine characteristics were associated with success in a distributive negotiation. Finally, men exceeded women when told that feminine characteristics were associated with poor negotiating performance (Kray et al., 2002).

The literature on gender in negotiation seems to be quite extensive, however, some gaps need to be addressed. Firstly, most of the studies are context-specific (e.g., naysayers, external information, initiations, and expectations). Second, most studies explained the habits, traits and behaviour of men and women in negotiation. There was little literature available about the influence of gender on patterns of adaptability, which addressed the need for additional research.

After having explored both strategic adaptability and the role of gender in influencing communication styles, the following chapter introduces multiple hypotheses to enhance the literature about the influence of gender on patterns of strategic adaptability in dyadic negotiations.

3. Hypotheses

This chapter proposes five hypotheses which contribute to answering the main research question.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, women more often fit the communion gender stereotype which means that their focus lies more towards collectivism and achieving welfare for others. Men on the other hand are more likely to fit the agency gender stereotype which means that their focus lies more towards individualism and achieving their own goals (Deaux & Lewis, 1983; Haines et al., 2016).

This aligns with the theory that women tend to be more flexible than men (Babcock et al., 2013; Mazei et al., 2015), as they may be more willing to contribute to the opponent's interests. Women also more often use a collaborative and accommodating communication style in negotiations (Walters et al., 1998). In addition, women listen more actively than men and are more likely to pick up subtle cues in the negotiation. Research has also indicated that women often seek mutual benefits in negotiation and prioritize relationship-building (Babcock et al., 2013; Martin & et al., 2012). The tendency of women to maintain relationships may drive them to adjust their strategy more often to keep the negotiation process in motion. Something that already is found by Bowles and Flynn (2010), only in the specific context of negotiating with a 'naysayer'.

On the other hand, men's negotiation styles typically encompass a more competitive and assertive communication style. Their focus lies more often on achieving specific goals, and care less about relationship-building (Walters et al., 1998). Men's focus on achieving their own goals fits the agency gender stereotype (Deaux & Lewis, 1983; Haines et al., 2016). This approach may be advantageous in distributive situations but could also lead to missed opportunities for mutual benefits and stronger relationships.

The connections between the literature suggest that women are more likely to adapt their strategy due to more active listening, relational focus, and overall flexibility in communication. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H1: Women are more likely to change their negotiation strategy than men.

Integrative negotiations seek maximum output for both parties, more like a win/win scenario rather than a win/lose scenario (Hawes & Fleming, 2014). When negotiating, women often use a flexible and collaborative strategy which aligns with their stereotypical priority of seeking mutual benefits and forming relationships (Babcock et al., 2013; Deaux & Lewis, 1983; Haines et al., 2016; Mazei et al., 2015). These findings also align with Walters et al. (1998), as they suggest that women are more likely to engage in a cooperative negotiation due to their focus on maintaining momentum in a conversation.

Another research, conducted by Bowles and Flynn (2010), found that women's adaptability is often driven by their focus on the preservation of the relationship between both parties, which aligns with the findings above. When looking at integrative negotiations, women's natural tendency to be more flexible and cooperative aligns closely with their underlying goal to achieve a win-win outcome. Therefore, when women are faced with an opponent who is already dominantly using an integrative negotiation strategy, there may seem less need to change their strategy.

In addition, Bowles and Flynn (2010) found that women are more likely to adapt their strategy when negotiating with a 'naysayer'. One could argue that 'naysayers' are more likely to be distributive since they refuse to make asked-for concessions. Hence, when negotiating with a dominantly integrative opponent, women may be less likely to adapt their strategy.

Since the priorities of both parties are concentrated on maximizing mutual benefits, women may perceive that they can continue the conversation for a longer extend without changing their preferred approach. Therefore, the following hypothesis was tested:

H2: If the opponent dominantly uses an integrative negotiation strategy, women are less likely to change their strategy.

Contradicting to H2, men may be less likely to change their strategy when negotiating with a dominantly distributive opponent.

As mentioned, one could argue that 'naysayers' are more likely to be distributive. Men are also found to be more persistent than women with their strategy when negotiating with a 'naysayer'(Bowles & Flynn, 2010). In addition, men's cognitive flexibility is found to be more impaired with stress than women (Shields et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022). One could argue that dominantly distributive negotiations typically are more stressful as the two parties struggle to find an agreement that is beneficial for both.

Hence, this could indicate that men are less likely to change strategy when negotiating with someone who dominantly uses a distributive strategy. Therefore, the following hypothesis was tested:

H3: If the opponent dominantly uses a distributive negotiation strategy, men are less likely to change their strategy.

When maintaining a distributive strategy, negotiators seek to maximize their gain at the expense of the other. This often involves a more competitive win/lose dynamic. This type of negotiation thus often results in a deal that is beneficial for one party, while the other party may feel shortchanged (Hawes & Fleming, 2014). In distributive scenarios, men can amplify their natural tendency to present themselves in a more assertive and competitive position. Research conducted by Walters et al. (1998) suggested that men, in contrast to women, tend to prioritize achieving their own pre-set goals and are less focused on maintaining relationships when negotiating.

The tendency of men to pursue their own goals could clash when two men negotiate and do not want to budge. Such a situation is called a deadlock, and negotiators should adapt their strategy or move to another issue to solve this (Druckman, 2001). A deadlock situation does not happen often, as it is the result of 'ping-ponging' multiple distributive speaking turns to bargain, which ultimately leads to both negotiators being at the limit of their flexibility. One could argue that the bargaining stage before the actual deadlock becomes increasingly uncomfortable. Consequently, less dominant (anxiety-sensitive) negotiators may adapt their strategy before reaching the actual deadlock to get out of the uncomfortable situation. This aligns with the theory from Brooks and Schweitzer (2011), as they found that negotiators who experience anxiety are more likely to exit while bargaining to avoid getting into more stressful bargaining situations.

Although women are found to be twice as likely to experience anxiety (Bahrami & Yousefi, 2011), this hypothesis proposes that men are more likely to get into the bargaining stage that could inflict anxiety. Combining these theories suggests that men, who are more likely to apply a distributive strategy, would face a stressful situation more often when negotiating with another male. Therefore, to avoid ending in a deadlock situation, need to adapt their strategy. This was formulated and tested as the following hypothesis:

H4: Men are more likely to adapt their negotiation strategy when their opponent is male.

When negotiating, asserting dominance is often associated with influencing and maintaining the process through power. Research conducted by Walters et al. (1998) suggested that men are more likely to adopt and assert a dominant behaviour in negotiation contexts. Their study also suggested that men tend to be more distributive as they prioritize achieving their pre-set goals over relationship building. This may translate to a reluctance to adapt strategy right away when needed.

The focus on asserting dominance to achieve personal gain over the other party may result in an increased competitive environment, where delaying an adaptation from distributive to integrative can act as a tactic to pressure the other party to adapt their strategy first. The tendency for men to assert dominance by delaying their strategic adaptation aligns with being less likely to directly follow a strategic adaptation made by their opponent.

Contrasting to men, women are more likely to prioritize relationship building and seek a win/win scenario (Babcock et al., 2013; Mazei et al., 2015). This, and the fact that women outperform men in active listening (Bowles & Flynn, 2010), may also suggest that women are more likely to sense when cooperation is needed and follow the adaptation directly to keep the negotiation moving forward. To highlight the difference in dominance and prioritization, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H5: Women are more likely to directly follow their opponent's strategy switch.

The following chapter explains the methodology and research approach that was used to answer these five hypotheses.

4. Methodology

Due to the confidential nature of this section, it has been excluded from the publicly available thesis and submitted as a confidential annex to the repository of the University of Twente

5. Results

This chapter presents the results of each hypothesis tested in this study based on the content analysis. Each hypothesis is formulated to explore differences in strategic adaptability among men and women. Due to the quantitative nature of the data, statistical analysis is used to test the hypotheses and visualize them.

5.1: How women compare to men in the number of strategic adaptations

To test whether women are indeed more likely to change their negotiation strategy than men, multiple tests were conducted to understand and analyse the gender and total adaptation variables. Due to the differences in negotiation duration, adaptations are divided by the number of speaking turns and presented as adaptation ratio. In this dataset, 43 women adapted on average 0.161 times per speaking turn during the negotiation (SD=0.0894). 63 men adapted on average 0.133 times per speaking turn (SD=0.0835). Both groups showed to be normally distributed (both $p > 0.05$ for the Shapiro-Wilk test). Levene's test resulted in ($p=0.8075$), indicating that the variances between the two groups are homogeneous.

Based on meeting the assumptions of normality and homogeneity, the independent two-sample t-test was conducted. For this test, the ratio of adaptations during the negotiation functioned as the dependent variable, and the negotiator's gender functioned as the independent variable.

The test outcome revealed no significant difference between women's adaptation ratio (M=0.161) compared with those of men (M=0.133). This as the p of 0.1096 (>0.05), in combination with a t-value of 1.6139 indicates that there is no significant difference between the groups. The following ANOVA test resulted in an F-value of 2.605, confirming the t-test outcome. Hence, the difference between women and men in the number of strategic changes as hypothesized in H1 is not supported due to insufficient evidence in this dataset.

5.2: How women compare to men when negotiating with an integrative opponent

To further understand the differences in adaptation ratios for women and men, the strategy of the opponent is included in the analysis. In specific, the opponent's percentage of integrative speaking turns in comparison with their distributive speaking turns, which is referred to as the 'integrative ratio' further in this research. (e.g., an integrative ratio of 80% means that 80% of the speaking turns in the negotiation were labelled as integrative, and 20% of the speaking turns in the negotiation were labelled as distributive)

The dataset was filtered to only include observations with opponents who dominantly use an integrative strategy (integrative ratio > 50). In this dataset, 31 women adapted on average 0.155 times per speaking turn during the negotiation (SD=0.103). 42 men adapted on average 0.117 times per speaking turn (SD=0.0769). Both groups showed to be normally distributed (both $p > 0.05$ for the Shapiro-Wilk test). Levene's test resulted in ($p=0.0962$), indicating that the variances between the two groups are homogeneous.

Based on meeting the assumptions of normality and homogeneity, the independent two-sample t-test was conducted. For this test, the adaptation ratio during the negotiation functioned as the dependent variable, and the negotiator's gender functioned as the independent variable.

The test outcome revealed a marginally significant (at the 10% level) difference between women's adaptation ratio (M=0.155) compared with those of men (M=0.117). This as the p of 0.07326 (<0.1), in combination with a t-value of 1.8181 indicates that there is a significant

difference between the groups. The following ANOVA test resulted in an F-value of 3.306, confirming a significant difference at the 10% level between the groups. This marginal effect, of women being more likely to change their strategy when negotiating with an opponent who is dominantly integrative, is the opposing to the hypothesis. Hence, although H2 can be rejected, the difference between women and men in the number of strategic changes when negotiating with an opponent who dominantly uses an integrative strategy is supported at the 10% significance level in this dataset.

5.3: How women compare to men when negotiating with a distributive opponent

To further understand the differences in adaptation ratios for women and men when negotiating with an opponent who dominantly uses a distributive strategy, the previous step was executed for a dataset that was filtered to only include observations with opponents who dominantly use a distributive strategy (integrative ratio < 50).

In this dataset, 11 women adapted on average 0.171 times per speaking turn during the negotiation (SD=0.0328). 21 men adapted on average 0.166 times per speaking turn (SD=0.07884). Both groups showed to be normally distributed (both $p > 0.05$ for the Shapiro-Wilk test). Levene's test resulted in (p=0.0067), indicating that the variances between the two groups are heterogeneous.

Based on meeting the assumptions of normality and heterogeneity, the Welch t-test was conducted. For this test, the adaptation ratio during the negotiation functioned as the dependent variable, and the negotiator's gender functioned as the independent variable.

The test outcome revealed a non-significant difference between women's adaptation ratio (M=0.171) compared with those of men (M=0.166). This as the p of 0.8344 (>0.05), in combination with a t-value of 0.2109 indicates that there is no significant difference between the groups. Hence, the difference between women and men in the number of strategic changes when negotiating with an opponent who dominantly uses a distributive strategy, as hypothesized in H3, is not supported due to insufficient evidence in this dataset.

5.4: How men compare to women when negotiating with a male opponent

To test whether men are more likely to adapt their strategy when negotiating with a male opponent, multiple tests were conducted on the dataset. The dataset was filtered to only include observations with male opponents (Male/Male, Female/Male). In this dataset, 23 women adapted on average 0.141 times per speaking turn during the negotiation (SD=0.0972). 40 men adapted on average 0.128 times per speaking turn (SD=0.0845). Both groups showed to be normally distributed (both $p > 0.05$ for the Shapiro-Wilk test). Levene's test resulted in (p=0.8085), indicating that the variances between the two groups are homogeneous.

Based on meeting the assumptions of normality and homogeneity, the independent two-sample t-test was conducted. For this test, the ratio of adaptations during the negotiation functioned as the dependent variable, and the negotiator's gender functioned as the independent variable.

The test outcome revealed no significant difference between women's adaptation ratio (M=0.141) compared with those of men (M=0.128). This as the p of 0.5683 (>0.05), in combination with a t-value of 0.5737 indicates that there is no significant difference between the groups. The following ANOVA test resulted in an F-value of 0.329, confirming no significant difference between the groups. Hence, the difference between women and men in

the number of strategic changes when negotiating with a male opponent as hypothesized in H4 is not supported due to insufficient evidence in this dataset.

Investigating differences between adaptation ratios when negotiating with a female opponent resulted in no significance as well. (Male/Female, Female/Female).

As none of the above results showed any significance whatsoever, a post-hoc explorative linear model was supplemented with the opponent's integrative ratio as a second independent variable to see if this made any difference. The data showed normality, homoscedasticity, non-multicollinearity, and non-linearity when adding the quadratic term for adaptation ratio. Hence, a polynomial regression model was applied. This resulted in a significant (p=0.018) and slightly fitting model with a r-squared of 0.18. Since the overall model is significant, it suggests that the opponent's gender and their integrative ratio together explain some of the variance in the adaptation ratio of male negotiators (the model for females was not significant). Figure 1 shows this effect for males. The lines indicate how the adaptation ratio for males changes as the opponent's integrative ratio increases for both male (blue) and female (red) opponents. In specific, the male adaptation ratio decreases when their female opponent becomes more integrative. This effect is contrariwise but still negative when males negotiate with a male opponent who becomes more integrative.

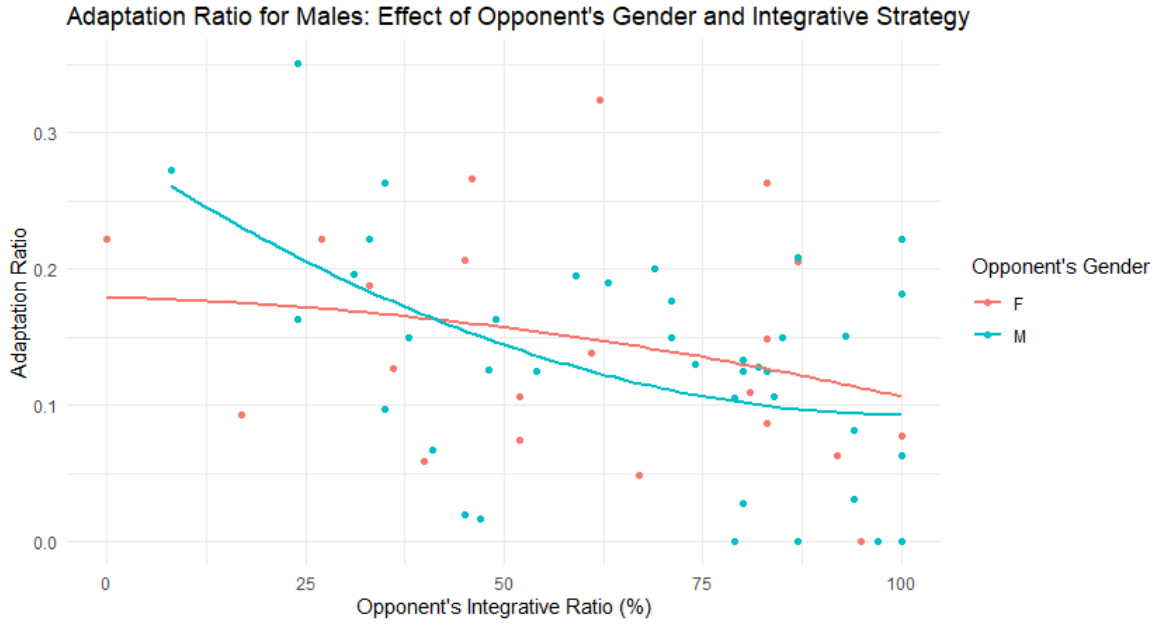

Figure 1: The effect of male and female opponents' integrative ratio on the adaptation ratio of men

5.5: How women compare to men in directly following their opponent's strategic adaptation

To test the difference in negotiators' reactions when their opponent adapts their strategy, the direct adaptation ratio is included in this analysis. This is calculated by dividing the amount of 'E' codes (when a negotiator directly follows their opponent's strategic shift) observed by the amount of speaking turns. The first glance at the data showed slight differences in mean direct adaptation ratio, with 43 women showing on average 0.0414 'E' codes per speaking turn (SD=0.0471) and 63 men averaging 0.0299 'E' codes per speaking turn (SD=0.0395). To further understand the differences, both groups were tested by the Shapiro-Wilk test and found to be non-normal distributed (both $p < 0.05$). Levene's test showed a homogeneity of variance between the groups (p=0.9595).

Based on the results mentioned above, the Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test was conducted. This test indicated that there is no significant (p=0.1092) difference between the direct adaptation ratios between men and women. Hence, the difference between women and men in the amount of direct strategic follows as hypothesized in H5 is not supported due to insufficient evidence in this dataset.

Since there was no significant difference, a post-hoc explorative linear model was supplemented with the opponent's integrative ratio as the second independent variable. The data showed non-normality, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, and linearity. Hence, the direct adaptation ratio was transformed with a logarithmic function and a robust regression model was applied. The opponent's integrative ratio resulted in a negative coefficient for males of -0.042 and a t-value of -2.68 which is statistically significant. The negative coefficient indicates that male negotiators tend to have a lower direct adaptation ratio when their opponent becomes more integrative during the negotiation. In specific, the direct adaptation ratio of females (red) does not seem to be affected (much) when their opponent becomes more integrative. Males (blue) tend to lower their direct adaptation ratio when their opponent becomes more integrative. Figure 2 shows this difference between males and females.

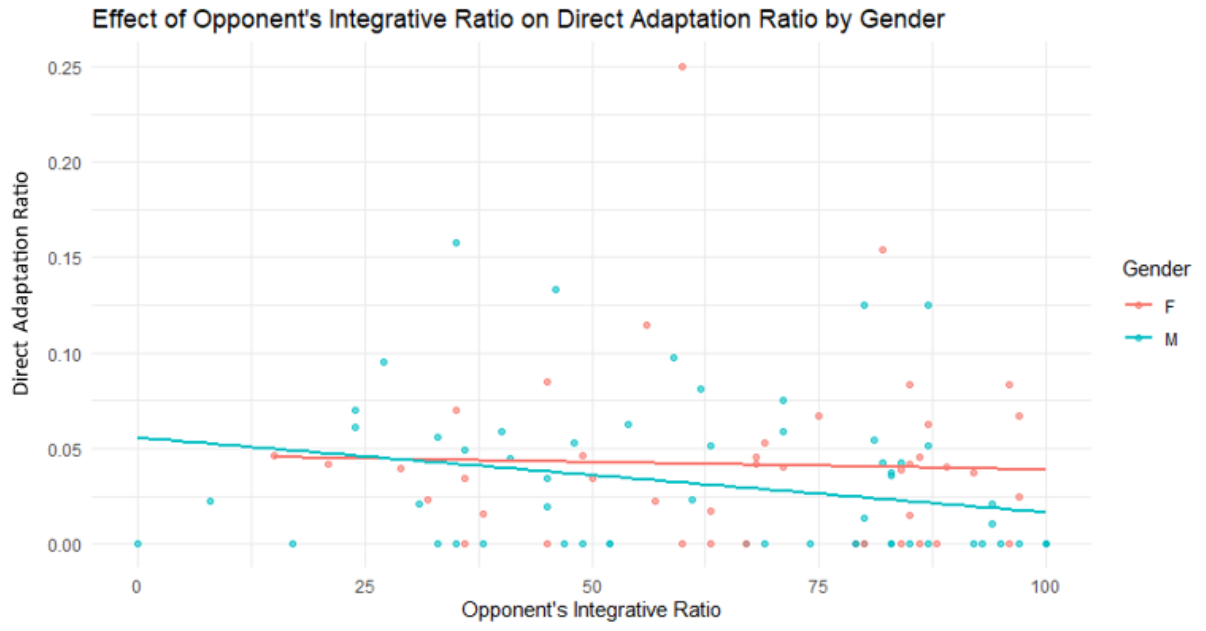

Figure 2: The effect of the opponent's integrative ratio on the direct adaptation ratio

6. Discussion

6.1 Recap and RQ Answer

This study investigated different behaviours in dyadic negotiations. In this study specifically, negotiations are typified as dynamic due to the complexity of multi-issue situations. Negotiations of this dynamic nature demand negotiators who are flexible and able to adapt and exercise a fitting strategy for the issue at hand. Furthermore, negotiators should be able to modify their approach based on the context, process, and content of the negotiation, as well as informational cues from their opponents. While extensive research already has been done on negotiations, strategic adaptability was only recently introduced as a framework by Heunis et al. (2024). They also mention that the effects of certain negotiator characteristics on strategic adaptability remain underrepresented in the literature and thus should be investigated further. This, and the literature gap on the interplay of gender and strategic adaptability in dyadic negotiations were fundamental factors in the motivation for this study. Hence, this study aimed to examine if these differences also apply to patterns of strategic adaptability. Understanding these patterns and the possible effects of gender could have valuable implications for tailored training, team dynamics and negotiating power enhancement. This led to the following research question:

How does a negotiator's gender influence adaptability patterns, and how do reactions to adaptability cues differ for both genders?

To answer this research question, five hypotheses have been tested by statistically analysing occurred codes in the transcripts of the negotiation simulations. The findings suggest that the influence of gender on adaptability patterns and reactions to adaptability cues are less represented in the data than hypothesized beforehand. Summarizing the findings to answer the research question thus may not answer it properly, as most of the findings were not significant. However, some findings were (almost) significant and were included in answering the main research question.

First, although it was expected that women show higher adaptation ratios than men, the higher adaptation ratio of women compared to men when including all the negotiations in the dataset was not significant. These results indicate that the gender characteristic of a negotiator does not immediately influence the overall number of strategic adaptations in a dyadic negotiation. The gender of the opponent was also found to be non-influential on a negotiator's adaptation ratio, as there was not any significant difference between the possible dyads (male/male, female/male, male/female, female/female). These results indicate that adaptability patterns are not primarily influenced by a negotiator's gender or the gender of their opponent. However, these results also propose that the differences in adaptation ratios between men and women are caused by other unobserved variables in the dataset and may even be different due to the interplay between gender and the unobserved variables.

Second, the adaptation ratio was expected to be influenced differently for men and women by the opponent's strategy. The results show an increased significance when analysing negotiations with dominantly integrative opponents, but this was only significant at the 10% level and contradicting to what was hypothesized in H2. Women were found to be more likely to adapt when negotiating with a dominantly integrative opponent, instead of being less likely. When looking at negotiations with dominantly distributive opponents, the difference in adaptation ratio between men and women disappeared. This indicates that the strategic behaviour of the

opponent could play a different role for men than for women. Further investigating this result by combining the opponent's gender and their integrative ratio as predictors for a negotiator's adaptation ratio resulted in a significant model that explains some of the variance for males. Although more in-depth research is required to understand how these mechanisms work, the results suggest that males are more likely to be influenced by the opponent's gender as well as their integrative ratio.

Third, women were expected to be more likely to follow their opponent's strategic switch directly (code E). The results suggest no significant difference in the direct adaptation ratio between men and women. The opponent's integrative ratio was added as the second independent variable for the direct adaptation ratio. The effect of the opponent's integrative ratio on a negotiator's direct adaptation ratio was found to be significant for males, indicating that the integrative ratio of the opponent is influential to the negotiator's direct adaptation ratio. More specifically, men decrease the frequency of directly following their opponent's strategic shifts when the opponent gets increasingly more integrative. Although more in-depth research is required to understand how these mechanisms work, the results suggest that the direct adaptation ratio of males is influenced differently in comparison with females by the opponent's integrative ratio.

6.2 Implications for Literature

The difference between men and women in negotiations is often described based on the general communication style deployments rather than looking at the act of strategically switching between them (Babcock et al., 2013; Mazei et al., 2015; Walters et al., 1998). Some other studies acknowledged the dynamic nature of negotiations and investigated facets of strategic adaptability (Olekalns et al., 2003; Putnam, 2010; Walton et al., 2000), but never highlighted gender-specific patterns of strategic adaptability. In addition, Bowles and Flynn (2010) suggested that women are more likely to pick up subtle cues than men. Although existing literature is based on the agency and communion stereotypes, there are many cases of more masculine females and more feminine males. And to keep the findings generalisable, this study used the same stereotypes. Therefore, this study hypothesized that women may be more likely to adapt their negotiation strategy than men. The first findings indicate no significant effect for a difference in the number of adaptations per speaking turn between men and women. The non-significant effect contributes to the literature as it suggests that the adaptation per speaking turn differences between men and women are more likely to rely on other (unobserved) variables than on their gender alone and thus should be further explored.

Second, this study contributes to literature about the way men and women react differently to cues and their opponents during the negotiations. Literature suggests that women are more likely to pick up subtle cues due to their improved ability to listen actively. Women are also more likely to focus on building and maintaining relationships. Women express this by being more likely to apply a collaborative and accommodating communication strategy. Men prioritize their own goals more often, and use competitive communication styles (Babcock et al., 2013; Mazei et al., 2015). This theoretically indicated that women pick up a strategic change in strategy faster and thus react faster by directly following the opponent's switch, and men are trying to be competitive as well as dominant and thus do not follow their opponent's strategic switch immediately. However, the results of this study showed no immediate significant difference between men and women in their direct adaptation ratio. The hypothesis was partly based on males being more likely to assert dominance in competitive negotiations.

However, this competitiveness reduces as the opponent's integrative ratio rises. Incorporating the opponent's integrative ratio resulted in a negative and significant outcome for males. Indicating that higher integrative ratios from the opponent negatively influence males in the way they directly follow their opponent's strategic change and contributing to existing literature by finding the expected results with this independent variable.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the literature of Heunis et al. (2024) by expanding its theoretical reach by exploring the moderating effect of gender on strategic adaptability. They created the framework for strategic adaptability that was used in this study to code the transcript of the negotiation simulations. This expanded the initial dataset of Heunis et al. (2024), which was mentioned in their paper as a limitation of their research. Even though gender did not directly influence adaptability patterns, combining integrative ratios suggested that there are indeed some differences in strategic adaptability patterns between men and women. This result contributes to other literature as it suggests that strategic adaptability is not only caused by the intended adaptations based on informational cues but also can differ for men and women when incorporating the opponent's integrative ratio.

7. Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This study has provided some valuable insights and contributions to the literature on gender differences in strategic adaptability. However, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged.

The first limitation of this study is based on the used coding scheme. Although this coding scheme was based on the strategic adaptability framework by Heunis et al. (2024), which was rigorously developed, it may not capture all the reasons for adaptations properly. The coding scheme was applied to the transcripts of four different negotiation simulations. Speaking turns in these transcripts were already coded as being either integrative or distributive by the original researchers and were not to be adjusted. During the coding, some codes did not fit the context but did fit the content of the speaking turn. For example, adapting to understand the opponent was labelled as 'G' in the codebook and could only be applied to integrative speaking turns as the negotiator adapts to hear about their opponent's motivations and feelings about the issue. In reality, some adaptations to understand the opponent were labelled as distributive. Hence, the 'G' code fitted the content but not the context, so code 'C' (adapting to the priority of the issue under discussion) was used as this was the general code to go to when the context was wrong. As this happened for the 'C' and 'G' and codes, data for those specific codes became unusable. Although this limited the usable sample even further, it did not change the outcome of the results as these were not included in the focus of this study. Individually analysing these codes may provide additional insights in gender differences in adapting due to the priority of the issue under discussion (code C) and adapting to understand the opponent (code G). Future research could address this by creating alternative coding schemes that encompass more specific codes for the more specific cases.

The second limitation of this study is based on the exclusive focus on the binary gender categories of male and female. The dataset used in this study only contained males and females, without the presence of negotiators who identify as something else. Males and females fit the traditional agency and communion gender stereotypes, which allowed structured assumptions about their behaviour (Deaux & Lewis, 1983; Haines et al., 2016). It is important to acknowledge that men and women can deviate from these traditional stereotypes as some females are more masculine and some males are more feminine. In addition, relevant existing literature about gender differences in negotiation is mainly focused on the binary genders and traditional stereotypes, thus would be difficult to interpret as a source in multi-gender research. By not including individuals who identify differently than males or females, possible deviating adaptability patterns are overlooked in this study. Future research should aim to include negotiators who identify non-binary to explore specific non-binary strategic adaptability patterns.

Thirdly, the dataset contained 160 transcripts of dyadic negotiations from four different simulations taken as secondary data. Unfortunately, 214 of the 320 participants in the dataset missed the gender characteristic, limiting the useable dataset to a third of its original size. Therefore, caution should be taken when generalizing the findings of this study. Future research should include a larger and more diverse dataset to generalize the findings and increase the external validity of the findings.

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Appendix 1: Codebook and Coding-rules

Type	Label	Operationalization	Code
Context	Adapt to external factors	Adapting strategy after external factors, such as policy or leadership changes or the inclusion of third parties, changes the negotiation context.	A
Process	Adapt to deadlock	Adapting strategy after being stuck in the negotiation process, e.g., due to different opinions/ positions	B
Content	Adapt to priority of issue under discussion	Adapting the strategy depending on the importance of the topic under discussion (e.g., when making offers or changing topics)	C
	Adapt to new information on issue	Adapting strategy to new contextual information	D
Opponent	Follow adaptation by opponent	Directly following the opponent's strategy change to synchronize strategy.	E
	Delayed adaptation to opponent	Adapting to an opponent's change in strategy with a delay or adapting to the opponent's resistance to follow a change in strategy	F
	Adapt to understand opponent	Adapting strategy to understand or clarify the opponent's interests, concerns, feelings, motivation, or thoughts	G

Note. *Taken from Heunis et al., 2024.*

Coding rules:

- Code G can only be applied on integrative speaking turns.
- If code G is impossible due to the speaking turn being distributive, code C should be applied.