



Negotiating face-to-face: Men's facial structure predicts negotiation performance

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 27 March 2013

Received in revised form 10 October 2013

Accepted 16 December 2013

Available online 16 July 2014

Editor: Panu Poutvaara

Keywords:

Leadership

Negotiation

Facial structure

Facial width-to-height ratio

ABSTRACT

Although a great deal of research has examined specific behaviors that positively affect leaders' negotiation processes and outcomes, there has been considerably less attention devoted to stable characteristics, psychological or physical, that might also influence outcomes at the bargaining table. In the current research, we identify a measureable physical trait – the facial width-to-height ratio – that predicts negotiation performance in men. Across four studies, we show that men with greater facial width-to-height ratios are less cooperative negotiators compared to men with smaller facial ratios. This lack of cooperation allows men with greater facial width-to-height ratios to claim more value when negotiating with other men, but inhibits their ability to discover creative agreements that benefit all negotiating parties. These results provide insight into the factors linking leadership, facial structure and conflict resolution.

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Introduction

A critical determinant of a leader's effectiveness is the ability to successfully secure scarce resources, to sell ideas and to implement strategy within the organization (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2009). Negotiation is a ubiquitous tool for achieving these important outcomes and, as such, the leadership literature has highlighted the importance of managers' ability to negotiate with others. For example, existing research has noted the importance of both managers' ability to negotiate with peers, superiors and subordinates (Watson & Hoffman, 1996) as well as leaders' ability to negotiate with other leaders (e.g., in TMTs; Edmondson, Roberto, & Watkins, 2003). Given the importance of negotiation skill to organizational outcomes, a substantial literature has sought to identify the drivers of successful negotiation performance (Thompson, Wang, & Gunia, 2010). However, much of this work has focused on specific behaviors that can be enacted by negotiators, such as asking questions, making aggressive first offers, or mimicking one's counterpart (Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001; Maddux, Mullen, & Galinsky, 2008; Thompson, 1991). There has been considerably less attention devoted to stable characteristics, psychological or physical, that might influence individual and joint outcomes.

On one hand, this lack of attention is not particularly surprising given that little reliable evidence has been found for effects of stable individual differences, such as personality traits, on negotiation outcomes (Barry & Friedman, 1998). In addition, immutable characteristics offer little prescriptive opportunity for negotiators. On the other hand, one physical characteristic that *has* received attention – negotiator sex – has yielded a variety of important, robust and replicable effects (see Kray & Thompson, 2005 for a review), which suggests that additional research on the impact of biologically-determined characteristics in negotiation may be warranted. In

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the current research, we draw on recent findings in the field of evolutionary psychology to develop a model of how a subtle physical characteristic – facial structure – may play a key role in negotiation success.

The facial width-to-height ratio (fWHR) is a stable physical trait that is associated with aggressive, self-interested behavior in men (Carré & McCormick, 2008; Stirrat & Perrett, 2010; cf. Weston, Friday, & Liò, 2007). In the current paper, we extend this previous work to study how men's facial structure relates to negotiation outcomes. We predict that those with greater fWHRs will demonstrate more competitive and less cooperative behavior at the bargaining table, which can be both a blessing and a curse. By focusing on one's own success, a greater facial ratio may be associated not only with effectively claiming value during a negotiation, but also with an inability to develop creative solutions that benefit both sides.

By exploring the relationship between facial characteristics and negotiation performance we extend theory and research in a number of important ways. Most significantly, we identify a new and persistent physical characteristic that predicts negotiation outcomes. Specifically, we show how men's facial width, relative to their facial height, predicts how they approach conflict resolution and the outcomes they achieve at the bargaining table. In addition, we extend the growing literature on how physical characteristics relate to behavior in organizations to a novel and important domain by examining the correlates of men's facial structure in a negotiation context.

Facial width-to-height ratio

The facial width-to-height ratio has recently been identified as a sexually dimorphic trait with men having greater ratios than women (Weston et al., 2007). Research suggests that this dimorphism is a result of evolutionary pressures that have selected for relatively greater facial ratios in men compared to women. The precise selection pressures leading to this dimorphism have recently been debated. One perspective suggests that men have greater fWHRs than women because women may generally be more attracted to men with greater fWHRs, and thus men with greater facial ratios will have more opportunities to pass this trait to future generations (i.e., inter-sexual selection; Weston et al., 2007).

Others, however, have challenged this argument, particularly in light of recent research calling into question whether fWHR is indeed sexually dimorphic (Geniole, Keyes, Mondloch, Carré, & McCormick, 2012; Lefevre et al., 2012; Ozener, 2012). For example, Stirrat and Perrett (2010) demonstrated that women (and men) perceive men with greater facial ratios to be *less* physically attractive. This implies that evolutionary pressures relating to fWHR are more likely to be a result of a selection process that occurs between men (i.e., intra-sexual selection). According to this perspective, for men with greater facial ratios to secure resources for themselves and their offspring, they must take what they need from other men (see Puts, 2010).

Consistent with this argument, fWHR is associated with aggressive behavior (Carré & McCormick, 2008): Men with greater fWHRs are more likely to react aggressively to a perceived slight by others, and hockey players with greater facial ratios are more likely to be penalized in hockey games than are men with smaller facial ratios (but see also Deaner, Goetz, Shattuck, & Schnotala, 2012). Similarly, men with greater fWHRs are better able to defend themselves from death by contact violence (Stirrat, Stulp, & Pollet, 2012), suggesting that they hold an advantage in physical altercations with other men. Perhaps underlying these results, fWHR is related to baseline testosterone levels in men (Lefevre, Lewis, Perrett, & Penke, 2013) and is theorized to relate to testosterone exposure at puberty (Carré & McCormick, 2008; see also Marečková et al., 2011) which may, in turn, lead to more aggressive behavior (cf. Ronay & Galinsky, 2011). Interestingly, it does not appear that fWHR is predictive of any changes in behavioral or psychological outcomes in women (Carré & McCormick, 2008; Haselhuhn & Wong, 2012; Stirrat & Perrett, 2010). Consistent with this past work, the current study focuses exclusively on the effects of men's fWHR.

Recent research has investigated some of the downstream consequences that may arise from greater fWHR and its associated levels of aggression. Stirrat and Perrett (2010) demonstrated that men's facial ratios predicted self-interested behavior and the tendency to violate trust in an economic game. A recent paper by Haselhuhn and Wong (2012) has extended this work into unethical behavior. They reasoned that the self-interest and aggression felt by men with greater facial ratios would lead them to act unethically in order to meet their goals. Consistent with this prediction, men with greater fWHRs were more likely to explicitly deceive others in a negotiation and were more likely to cheat in order to increase their financial gain.

Fundamentally, the research described above illustrates how men's fWHR relates to social interaction at the most basic level by describing how men act in their own self-interest and respond with aggressive, confrontational behaviors when their interests are threatened. Of course, social interactions in organizations are often more nuanced—outside of sporting events, physical aggression is rarely condoned as an effective approach to resolving conflict. Rather, conflict resolution most often requires parties to work together to jointly make decisions about the division of scarce resources (i.e., negotiation; Thompson, 2005). Thus, in the next section we apply the findings of fWHR research to the negotiation literature and develop specific hypotheses regarding how men approach and resolve conflict as a function of their facial structure.

fWHR and negotiation

In considering how men's facial structure may relate to negotiation and conflict resolution, it is helpful to think about the basic form and function of negotiation processes and outcomes. Although some negotiations are purely competitive, such that each party seeks to claim as much value as possible, many others involve a tension between claiming value and creating value (Lax & Sebenius, 1986). Value claiming is characterized by securing as many resources for one's self as possible in a negotiation (i.e., *distributive* bargaining), whereas value creation is characterized by integrating negotiators' perspectives and priorities to generate creative solutions that benefit all parties involved and expand the available resources (i.e., *integrative* bargaining). The distinction

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