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# Does consistency pay? The effects of information sequence and content on women's negotiation outcomes

Carol T Kulik, *University of South Australia*

Mara Olekalns, *Melbourne Business School*

Emma T Swain, *University of Melbourne*



**DOES CONSISTENCY PAY? THE EFFECTS OF INFORMATION SEQUENCE AND  
CONTENT ON WOMEN'S NEGOTIATION OUTCOMES**

Carol T. Kulik  
School of Business  
University of South Australia

Mara Olekalns  
Melbourne Business School  
University of Melbourne

Emma T. Swain  
Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences  
University of Melbourne

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**ABSTRACT**

Women are usually perceived as warm or competent, but rarely both. This research investigates how the sequence and content of warmth-relevant relational information and competence-relevant performance information affects female negotiators' social (perceptions of their warmth and competence) and economic outcomes. Female employers (but not male employers) rated a negotiating female employee as high warmth when they received relational information first and were able to discount the employee's competence with a team-based relational attribution (E1) or when they received performance information first and were convinced the employee's warm behavior was genuine (E2). The sequence and content of warmth-relevant and competence-relevant information interacted with employers' first impressions to affect the employee's negotiation outcomes. When performance information was presented first, the female employee's distributive outcomes benefited from high-competence impressions with female employers but from low-competence impressions with male employers (E1); her distributive outcomes were harmed by authentic warmth in negotiations with male employers (E2). When relational information was presented first, the female employee's distributive outcomes suffered as a result of converging information about high-competence (E1); integrative outcomes benefitted when relational information was offset by impressions of low, instrumental warmth (E2). The results suggest that pre-negotiation information can help women to preserve their social outcomes (perceptions of warmth) in a negotiation context.

Results also suggest that warmth impressions impact integrative outcomes but competence impressions impact distributive outcomes.

Individual competence is important, but it is not the sole factor driving a successful career (Fiske, 2012; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004). Success in many organizational roles and contexts depends on social capital (Fiske, 2012). Employees who are warm, friendly and likeable are more likely to establish high-quality organizational relationships (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008) and, in turn, have more access to resources, be given more challenging work assignments, and receive better performance evaluations (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Harris, Kacmar & Witt, 2005). Being perceived as competent and warm helps people to make the most of job opportunities (Operario & Fiske, 2001).

Unfortunately, being perceived as competent *and* warm is a “tall order, especially for women” (Rudman & Glick, 2001: 758). Women are respected for their competence or liked for their warmth – but usually not both (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004). Competence and warmth operate “like a seesaw” (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy & Glick, 1999: 476), where increases in perceived competence generate decreases in perceived warmth (and vice versa). As a result, female employees face a “damned if they do, damned if they don’t” impression management dilemma (Kray, Locke & Van Zant, 2012). On the one hand, if female employees fail to self-promote or otherwise draw attention to their performance, they are vulnerable to perceptions of low competence (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999). On the other hand, if they do perform well and act agentically, female employees will enhance an employer’s perception of their competence – but at a cost to their perceived warmth.

This dilemma is experienced with particular intensity in negotiation contexts. Women could increase their economic outcomes by negotiating more often and more competitively, but women who negotiate are liked less and perceived to be more demanding than women who simply accept what they are offered (Bowles & Babcock, 2013). Their perceived warmth is

fragile and easily downgraded. Researchers have recommended that female negotiators deliberately signal a “blend” of competence and warmth (Kray et al., 2012). For example, Carli, LaFleur and Leober (1995) found that women were significantly more likeable when their influence attempts were accompanied by a friendly facial expression. However, communicating competence and warmth within an ongoing negotiation imposes an additional burden on the female negotiator (Rudman & Phelan, 2008) and may be misunderstood by her negotiation partner. A more effective strategy might be to establish the female negotiator as competent and warm before the negotiation even begins (e.g., through a company letter – Heilman & Okimoto, 2007 or a “life philosophy” essay – Rudman & Glick, 2001).

In this research, we draw on the social cognition and social stereotyping literatures to make predictions about how the sequence and content of relational (warmth-relevant) and performance (competence-relevant) information contained in a letter of reference will impact perceptions of a female negotiator’s warmth and competence. Letters of reference provide employers with information about a new employee’s performance, but they also convey information about her warmth, friendliness, and other relational attributes (Madera, Hebl & Martin, 2009). We examine how competence and warmth information contained in these letters interacts with first impressions to impact the female negotiator’s economic outcomes.

### **THE COMPETENCE-WARMTH SEESAW**

When people form impressions of others, two dimensions are particularly salient and important (Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2007; Holoien & Fiske, 2013): competence and warmth. People infer competence after observing a stranger’s abilities, skills and performance; they infer warmth after observing the stranger’s friendliness and sociability (Fiske, 2012). Although competence and warmth judgments are both essential to person perception, warmth judgments

carry more weight in affective and behavioral reactions (Fiske et al., 2007). Warmth is primary because there are greater risks (e.g., exploitation) associated with dealing with someone who is not warm versus not competent (Wojciszke, 2005). Low-warmth people are expected to act on self-interest and pursue competitive goals (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002).

These two dimensions underlie many social stereotypes (Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 2007). Social groups tend to be high on one or high on the other, but not usually both at once. The “seesaw” relationship (Fiske et al., 1999: 476) between competence and warmth helps perceivers to make judgments along both dimensions even when they only have information about one. For example, Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt and Kashima (2005) gave research participants information about two groups’ standing on one dimension (competence or warmth). Even though the participants received information about only one dimension, they inferred the other: they saw the high competence group as less warm than the low competence group and they saw the high warmth group as less competent than the low warmth group.

Gender stereotypes display the competence-warmth tradeoff: Women are usually viewed as low in competence but high in warmth, and men as high in competence but low in warmth (Eckes, 2002). However, the act of negotiating has a dramatic impact on the competence-warmth seesaw. In a series of studies Bowles, Babcock and Lai (2007) demonstrated that a *negotiating* woman was perceived as competent but also was perceived as less nice and more demanding than a non-negotiating woman. People judge competent women as less friendly, helpful, sincere, trustworthy and moral, and as more hostile, selfish, devious and quarrelsome (Heilman, Block & Martell, 1995; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007).

In this research, we examine the competence-warmth seesaw within a negotiation between a new female employee and her employer. Competence and warmth are usually viewed

as opposing traits but they are not completely irreconcilable (Rudman & Glick, 1999). People may be able to strategically exploit the seesaw relationship between competence and warmth. For example, Holoien and Fiske (2013) demonstrated that people actively downplayed their warmth in order to appear competent and downplayed their competence in order to appear warm. But can a negotiating woman maintain warmth without a corresponding loss of competence? And if she can, what is the resulting impact on economic outcomes?

In two experiments, we consider the interactive impact of two information sources on a female negotiator's social and economic outcomes. We examine an *external* source of information by manipulating information contained in letters of reference. We also examine a *direct* source of information – the negotiation partner's first impression of the negotiating female employee.

## **EXPERIMENT 1 HYPOTHESES**

### **Information Sequence and Information Content**

The judgments we make about other people's warmth and competence have underdetermined answers. The judgments can be supported or refuted by additional data, but there are no criteria for demonstrating that a judgment is undeniably right or wrong. In these circumstances, perceivers are likely to use an anchoring-and-adjustment strategy (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). The perceiver will recruit a relevant piece of information to serve as an anchor or starting point. As additional information is received, the anchor is adjusted to eventually derive a final response (Tamir & Mitchell, 2013). However, the anchor exerts “drag” on the final judgment (Epley & Gilovich, 2006). People over-attend to information that confirms their initial judgments (Klayman & Ha, 1987). Perceivers do not adjust enough, so their final judgments tend to be biased toward the anchor.



How will this play out in the negotiation context? We predict that employers whose first piece of information about a new employee is relational will immediately form an impression of her warmth. Once the warmth judgment is “anchored,” employers will be motivated to interpret new information in a way that confirms the initial judgment. Subsequent information about the employee’s performance and capabilities (with competence implications) will have less negative effects on final judgments of warmth.

Women may, therefore, benefit when their warmth is firmly established as early as possible (Kulik & Olekalns, 2012) – even before the negotiation begins. Then the potential for incoming competence-relevant information to exert a seesaw effect on warmth will be reduced, especially if the subsequent information is ambiguous and open to interpretation. Heilman (2012) suggested that a woman may be able to protect her warmth by redirecting responsibility for her success away from herself, to chance, to someone else, or to circumstances. For example, high performance exhibited within a team context obscures the visibility of individual contributions, so it is likely to encourage the use of “attributional rationalizations” (Heilman, 2001) that explain high competence in a way that protects an initial warmth judgment. Attributional rationalizations are facilitated if the performance information is warmth-relevant as well as competence-relevant (Tinsley, Cheldelin, Schneider & Amanatullah, 2009), so women experience fewer social costs if their high performance reflects relational concerns as well as competence (Bowles & Babcock, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007). In our research, performance that can be attributed to a *team* (rather than the individual) provides an opportunity for the employer to “explain away” competence and confirm warmth. Success in a team context generates a relational attribution for performance; it affirms a woman’s role as a team player and demonstrates her willingness to act for the greater good. Therefore, we predict that:

**H1:** There will be a two-way interaction between Information Sequence and Information Content. Employers who receive relational information before performance information and who receive team-based performance information will perceive the employee as more warm compared to the other conditions.

### **Employer Gender**

In interpersonal encounters, women place a particularly high priority on assessing warmth over competence (Wojciszke, Razinska & Jaworski, 1998). This priority may reflect traditional gender stereotypes, in which women are expected to emphasize warmth (communal traits and behaviors) over competence (agentic traits and behaviors) (Fiske et al., 2007). While both men and women endorse these stereotypes (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), women are more likely to derogate “black sheep” women who violate them (e.g., Kulik & Holbrook, 2000; Parks-Stamm, Heilman, & Hearn 2008; Rudman, 1998). Further, women may have inflated expectations for warmth from other women (Kulik, Metz, & Gould, in press) and so even a woman who displays communal behavior may be viewed as not warm enough “for a woman” (Biernat, 2003). Women’s sensitivity to warmth may be particularly potent in negotiation contexts, where women are alert to the potential for exploitation. For example, in contexts with cooperative potential, such as trust and investment games, women report lower levels of trust in others than men (Buchan, Croson & Solnick, 2008) and women are less willing than men to work with a woman who initiates a negotiation (Bowles et al., 2007). Therefore, we predict that the two-way interaction described in H1 will be amplified in negotiations with female employers and attenuated in negotiations with male employers:

**H2:** There will be a three-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content, and Employer Gender. *Female* employers who receive relationship information

before performance information and who receive ambiguous performance information will perceive the employee as more warm compared to the other conditions.

### **First Impressions**

In any social situation, perceivers integrate information across multiple sources and channels. Some judgments (e.g., trustworthiness, extraversion, intelligence) are based on extremely thin slices of expressive behavior (Ambady, 2010; Gladwell, 2005). First impressions happen automatically and quickly – based on a 6-second exposure to a video (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993) or a 100 millisecond exposure to a face (Willis & Todorov, 2006). These first impressions do not require verbal interaction – they can be based on a handshake, facial expression, manner of dress, and other nonverbal cues (Barrick, Swider & Stewart, 2010).

Research in business contexts suggests that interviewers form first impressions of an interviewee's competence and warmth before the formal structured interview even begins (Barrick et al., 2010). Consequently, initial impressions may interact with information from external sources (e.g., reference letters) to shape negotiators' economic outcomes (Curhan & Pentland, 2007). We consider two alternative processes through which first impressions and external information might influence economic outcomes: convergence and offset.

In general, perceivers prefer coherence across sources and channels of information, so that consistency makes a better impression than inconsistency (Weisbuch, Ambady, Clarke, Achor & Weele, 2010). Consistency makes behavior predictable, raising fewer questions about negotiators' intentions and making it easier to anticipate their next moves. Consistency makes it easier to thoroughly explore individuals' interests so that negotiators can improve their outcomes. This preference for consistency suggests that female negotiators will benefit economically when information from multiple sources converge to signal warmth. In

Experiment 1, this convergence occurs when first impressions of high warmth are reinforced by an early presentation of relational information (relational before performance) and team-based performance information.

**H3a (convergence):** There will be a three-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content, and pre-negotiation impressions. A female employee will obtain better economic outcomes when external sources of information *converge* with first impressions to signal warmth than when these sources provide inconsistent information about her warmth.

Consistent warmth, however, has its downside. When negotiators experience high levels of interpersonal liking and trust they may over-accommodate (Amanatullah, Morris & Curhan, 2008) and be less likely to explore tradeoffs that create better outcomes for both parties (Curhan, Neale, Ross & Rosencranz-Engelmann, 2008; Miles & LaSalle, 2009). Conversely, employers may be tempted to under-accommodate a “nice” employee, anticipating that she is more exploitable (Fiske et al., 2002; Kray et al., 2012). Therefore, negotiators are often advised to implement firm flexibility (Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Pruitt, 1981) – to signal niceness *and* toughness in order to protect and improve their economic outcomes (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Kray et al., 2012). The principle of firm flexibility implies that negotiators will benefit if they can offset warmth by simultaneously conveying their willingness to resist opponents’ demands. In Experiment 1, initial impressions of high warmth will be offset by the presentation of performance information before relational information and the presentation of unambiguous individual-based performance information.

**H3b (offset):** There will be a three-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content, and pre-negotiation impressions. A female employee will obtain

better economic outcomes when external sources of information *offset* first impressions than when these sources converge to reinforce perceived warmth.

## **EXPERIMENT 1 METHOD**

### **Participants**

One hundred and fifty six undergraduate and masters-level students (116 females and 40 males) from a large metropolitan university participated in a simulated employment contract negotiation. Participants had an average age of 22.05 years ( $SD = 4.59$ ) and 2.39 years work experience ( $SD = 3.81$ ). Participants were recruited through campus-wide advertisements and paid for their participation.

### **Procedure**

On arrival, participants were seated at individual desks facing one another. They received a brief overview of the task (a simulated employment contract negotiation), including their assigned role as employer or employee, and were given an opportunity to read the background information. Employees in this negotiation were always female; employers were either male or female. Once both negotiators had read and understood their instructions, they completed a pre-negotiation questionnaire assessing their first impressions of their negotiation partner. Instructions were then repeated verbally and the negotiation began. Once the participants reached agreement, they completed a post-negotiation questionnaire assessing their final impressions of the negotiation partner.

Negotiators were required to reach agreement on nine issues. Four issues (job location, job assignment, base salary, performance incentive) were integrative. These issues had different values for the two negotiators, so that the negotiators could simultaneously improve their outcomes (create value) by giving concessions on their low value issues in exchange for concessions on their high value issues. Three issues (signing bonus, vacation length, relocation

expenses) were distributive. These issues had the same value for both parties, so negotiators could improve their outcomes only at the expense of their partner's outcomes. The remaining two issues (professional development days and contract renewal) were indifference issues; only one party placed value on each issue.

Our two manipulations (Information Sequence and Information Content) were embedded in the task instructions. The full text associated with the manipulations is documented in Appendix A. We manipulated *Information Sequence* by varying whether employers received information about the employee's relational skills (warmth-relevant) or performance and qualifications (competence-relevant) first. Relational and performance information were presented as excerpts from employees' reference letters. In the *Relational First* condition, information about the employee's relational skills was presented first ("Her interpersonal skills are excellent..."). Information about their job-related skills followed after an additional two pages of task instructions. In the *Performance First* condition, the information about job-related skills was presented first, and the relational skills information followed two pages later.

We also manipulated *Information Content*, varying whether the employee's performance was clearly attributable to her individual skills or to the team. In the *Individual Performance* condition, the information provided to employers presented the employee's performance as clearly attributable to the individual ("She is highly successful...she exceeded her target for client fees by \$250,000"). In the *Team Performance* condition, the information made it possible to attribute the employee's performance to the team rather than to her individual skills ("Her team is highly successful...the team exceeded their target for client fees by \$250,000").

*Impression Measures.* Before and after the negotiation, employers rated employees on 10 adjectives used in previous research (Fiske et al., 2002; Heilman et al., 2004) and chosen to

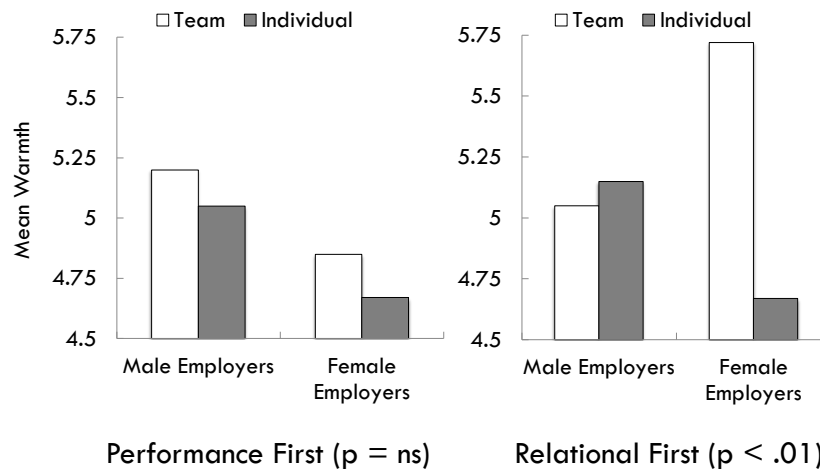
capture perceived warmth (warm, friendly, likeable, understanding, kind;  $\alpha = .89$ ) and competence (ambitious, rational, intelligent, determined, competitive;  $\alpha = .72$ ). The two scales were correlated at  $r = .26, p < .01$ .

### EXPERIMENT 1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Perceived Warmth.* We tested H1 and H2 in a 2 (Information Sequence: Relational First vs Performance First) x 2 (Information Content: Individual Performance vs Team Performance) x 2 (Employer Gender: Male vs Female) ANOVA, with repeated measures on warmth (pre- and post-negotiation). All analyses focused on employers' perceptions of the female employee. We found a significant three-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content and Employer Gender,  $F(1, 70) = 4.58, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$ . This interaction is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

#### Warmth as a function of Information Sequence, Information Content and Employer Gender



No other effects were significant. An analysis of simple effects, broken down by Information Sequence, showed that perceived warmth was unaffected by Information Content and Employer Gender when competence-relevant performance information was presented first,  $F(1, 34) = 0.18, p = ns$ . These variables significantly affected perceived warmth only when warmth-relevant relational information was presented first,  $F(1, 36) = 8.49, p < .01, \eta^2 = .19$ .

Consistent with H1, female employees' perceived warmth was highest when the first information available to employers anchored the warmth judgment and subsequent competence-relevant information attributed the female employee's performance to her team. However, as anticipated (H2), only female employers displayed this sensitivity to Information Sequence and Content.

*Perceived Competence.* We did not explicitly hypothesize effects on perceived competence, but we nonetheless conducted a 2 (Information Sequence) x 2 (Information Content) x 2 (Employer Gender) ANOVA, with repeated measures on competence (pre- and post-negotiation). No significant effects were found.

*Negotiation Outcomes.* To investigate H3a and H3b, we used ANCOVA to examine whether our manipulated variables (Information Sequence, Information Content and Employer Gender) and the employer's pre-negotiation impressions of the employee's warmth and competence (included as covariates) affected female employees' outcomes on integrative and distributive issues. We specified a model that included interactions between our independent variables and pre-negotiation impressions of warmth and competence, but excluded interactions between impressions of warmth and impressions of competence. Because the models included a large number of terms, we report only significant effects.

*Integrative issues.* We calculated the value of the female employee's contract for integrative issues (location, job assignment, base salary, performance incentive). We found no significant differences in female negotiators' integrative outcomes as a function of our independent variables, pre-negotiation impressions of warmth and competence, or their interactions.

*Distributive issues.* We calculated the value of the female employee's contract for distributive issues (signing bonus, vacation, relocation). Distributive outcomes were affected by



a 3-way interaction between Information Sequence, Employer Gender, and the employer's pre-negotiation impression of the female employee's competence,  $F(1,78) = 6.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . This interaction is shown in Figure 2. To interpret this and all other interactions involving pre-negotiation impressions, we split the sample into thirds based on employers' pre-negotiation ratings of the female employee's competence. We classified scores falling into the top third of the distribution as "high" and those falling into the bottom third of the distribution as "low."

**Figure 2**

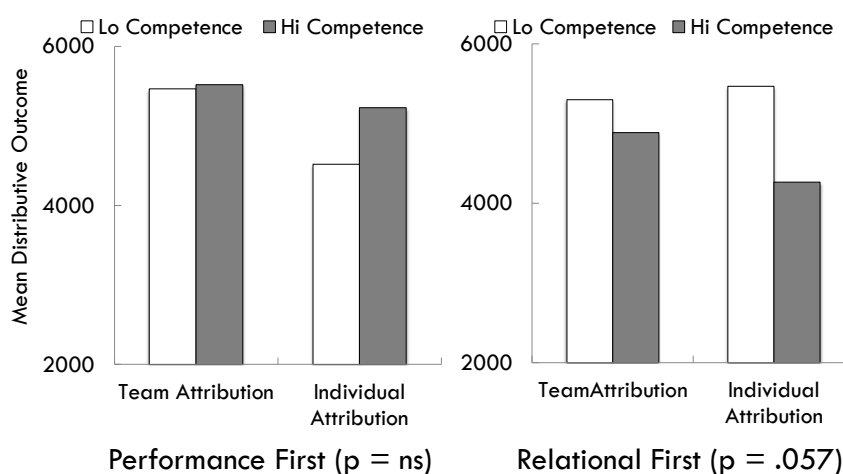
**Distributive outcomes as a function of Information Sequence, Employer Gender and pre-negotiation competence impressions**



An analysis of simple effects, broken down by Information Sequence, showed that Employer Gender and pre-negotiation impressions of competence affected a female employee's outcomes when performance information was presented first,  $F(1,38) = 5.61$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ , but not when relational information was presented first,  $F(1,39) = .03$ ,  $p = ns$ . When competence-relevant performance information was presented first, female negotiators benefited from convergence (H3a; a competent anchor aligned with a high-competence first impression) in negotiations with female employers but benefited from offset (H3b; a competent anchor in conjunction with a low-competence first impression) in negotiations with male employers.

Female employees' distributive outcomes were also affected by a 3-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content, and the employer's pre-negotiation impressions of the female employee's competence,  $F(1,78) = 4.66$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ . This interaction is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**  
**Distributive outcomes as a function of Information Sequence, Information Content and pre-negotiation competence impressions**



An analysis of simple effects, broken down by Information Sequence, showed that Information Content and pre-negotiation impressions of competence affected a female employee's outcomes when relational information was presented first,  $F(1,39) = 3.97$ ,  $p = .057$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ , but not when performance information was presented first,  $F(1,38) = .93$ ,  $p = ns$ . When relational information was presented first, performance that could be attributed to a team buffered the female employee. But she was penalized when an individual attribution for performance was reinforced by high perceived competence.

## Discussion

Results from Experiment 1 demonstrated that the information embedded in the female employee's reference letters affected her social outcomes. Female employees (but not male

employers) rated the negotiating female employee as high-warmth when they received relational information first and were able to discount her competence with a relational attribution.

Results on the negotiation's economic outcomes, however, suggested that neither presenting relational information first nor presenting performance information first had clear and consistent benefit for the female negotiator. Presenting relational information first disadvantaged the female employee when employers received congruent information about competence (a high-competence first impression and an individual attribution for her high performance). However, the impact of performance information was different depending on the gender of the information recipient. Female employees benefitted from offsetting early performance information with a low-competence first impression with male employers but benefitted from convergence (performance first + high-competence first impression) with female employers.

## **EXPERIMENT 2 HYPOTHESES**

In Experiment 1, we manipulated the content of performance information, anticipating that this information would be interpreted to align with earlier information about an employee's warmth. Warm behaviors usually reflect genuine dispositional warmth, but these behaviors can be used instrumentally to strategically convey a warm impression. In Experiment 2, we consider the content of relational information (whether a female employee's warm behavior can be attributed to authentic warmth or instrumental motives). We suggest that this relational information too will be interpreted to align with the earliest information the employer receives about the employee.

### **Information Sequence and Information Content**

All social judgments are underdetermined (lacking incontrovertible evidence that the judgments are right or wrong), but assessments about a stranger's warmth are particularly

underdetermined. Perceivers see warm behavior as controllable and socially cued, and thus not particularly diagnostic – “even evil people can be nice when it matters to them” (Fiske et al., 2007: 79). In order to be perceived as warm, a person must consistently display a narrow range of behavior, because even a small behavioral deviation is likely to be attributed to a deceptive disposition (Fiske et al., 2007; Reeder & Brewer, 1979). Perceivers are highly motivated to avoid mistakes and invest effort into making accurate judgments about a stranger’s warmth, making perceivers particularly sensitive to information signaling that a stranger is low on warmth (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer & Vohs, 2001; Fiske et al., 2007).

How will this affect female negotiators? We predict that employers whose first piece of information about a new female employee is performance-related will immediately form an impression of her as high-competence (and consistent with the seesaw effect, low-warmth). Having anchored these judgments, performance-first employers will be most sensitive to information suggesting that they should discount any evidence of the female employee’s warmth. In our research, evidence that the employee’s warm behavior is driven by instrumental motives provides an opportunity for the employer to “explain away” warmth. Therefore, we predict that:

**H4:** There will be a two-way interaction between Information Sequence and Information Content. Employers who receive performance information before relational information and who learn that the employee’s relational behavior is instrumental will perceive the employee as less warm compared to the other conditions.

As in Experiment 1, because women are particularly attuned to warmth information (Fiske et al., 2007; Wojciske et al., 1998), we predict:

**H5:** There will be a three-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content and Employer Gender. *Female* employers who receive performance information

before relational information and who learn that the employee's relational behavior is instrumental will perceive the employee as less warm compared to the other conditions.

### **First Impressions**

As in Experiment 1, we investigate how first impressions might interact with information obtained from external sources (e.g., reference letters) to influence an employer's judgments about an employee and negotiation outcomes. We expect that information suggesting that an employee's relational behavior is instrumental will be problematic for a female employee's negotiation outcomes. Usually relational behavior, even if enacted strategically, has positive effects on both distributive and integrative outcomes (Kopelman, Rosette & Thompson, 2006). However, when negotiators are suspicious of an opponent's behavior they are more likely to resist influence attempts (Oza, Srivastava & Koukova, 2010). Consequently, as in Experiment 1, the combined information received by an employer might either converge or offset first impressions. In Experiment 2, convergence occurs when first impressions of high warmth are reinforced by an early presentation of relational information (relational before performance) and attributions of authentic warmth. Alternatively, initial impressions of high warmth can be offset by the presentation of performance information before relational information and an attribution of instrumental warmth.

**H6a (convergence):** A female employee will obtain better economic outcomes when external sources of information converge with first impressions to signal warmth than when these sources provide inconsistent information about her warmth.

**H6b (offset):** A female employee will obtain better economic outcomes when external sources of information offset first impressions than when these sources converge to reinforce perceived warmth.

## EXPERIMENT 2 METHODS

### Participants

One hundred and sixty undergraduate and masters-level students (120 females and 40 males) from a large metropolitan university participated in a simulated employment contract negotiation. Participants had an average age of 22.9 years ( $SD = 4.6$ ) and an average of 2.45 years of work experience ( $SD = 4.5$ ). They were recruited through campus-wide advertisements and paid for their participation.

### Procedure

We used the same negotiation task as in Experiment 1. Our manipulations (Information Sequence and Information Content) were embedded in the task instructions. The full text associated with the Information Content manipulations is documented in Appendix B. Following our Experiment 1 procedure, we manipulated *Information Sequence* by varying whether employers received information about the employee's performance or relational skills first. Employers received the same competence information that we gave to employers in Experiment 1's Individual Performance condition. We also manipulated *Information Content*, suggesting that the employee's warm communal behavior reflected authentic niceness or instrumental motives. In the *Authentic* condition, the applicant was described as a natural "people person" with an extensive network ("She says she spends time in getting to know smart people because she enjoys having friends who are good quality, talented people and who offer her intellectual stimulation"). In the *Instrumental* condition, employers were told that the applicant had worked hard to develop her interpersonal skills and expand her network ("She says she invests time in getting to know smart people because they are the business leaders of the future and are likely to give her a business advantage").

*Impression Measures.* Before and after the negotiation, employers rated job applicants using the same adjective checklist that we used in Experiment 1. Reliabilities for the scales were .89 (warmth) and .81 (competence); the correlation between the scales was .38,  $p < .001$ .

## EXPERIMENT 2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Perceived Warmth.* We tested Hypotheses 4 and 5 in a 2 (Information Sequence: Relational First vs Performance First) x 2 (Information Content: Authentic vs Instrumental) x 2 (Employer Gender: Male vs Female) ANOVA, with repeated measures on warmth (pre- and post-negotiation). We found a significant three-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content, and Employer Gender,  $F(1, 71) = 4.83$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . This interaction is shown in Figure 4. No other effects were significant.

Figure 4

### Warmth as a function of Information Sequence, Information Content and Employer Gender



An analysis of simple effects showed that warmth ratings were unaffected by Information Content and Employer Gender when relational information was presented first,  $F(1, 35) = .62$ ,  $p = ns$ , but differed significantly as a function of these variables when performance information was presented first,  $F(1, 35) = 6.74$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .16$ . When female employers received

performance information first, the female employee was perceived as most warm when the performance information was offset by authentic warmth; she was perceived as least warm when the performance information was combined with instrumental warmth (H4, H5). Perceptions of warmth were unaffected by relational information (authentic vs instrumental) when female employees negotiated with male employers.

*Perceived Competence.* We conducted a 2 (Information Sequence) x 2 (Information Content) x 2 (Employer Gender) ANOVA, with repeated measures on competence ratings (pre- and post-negotiation). No significant effects were found.

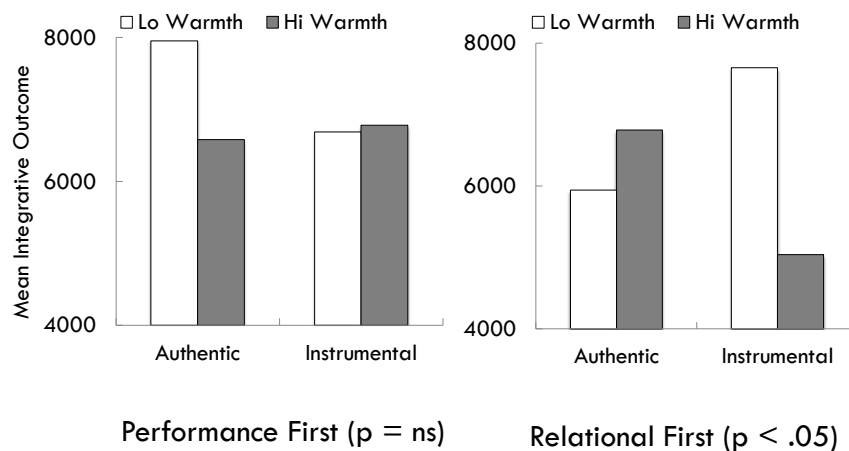
*Negotiation Outcomes.* We used ANCOVA to test whether our manipulated variables (Information Sequence, Information Content, and Employer Gender) and the employer's pre-negotiation impressions of competence and warmth (as covariates) affected female employees' outcomes on integrative and distributive issues. We specified a model that included interactions between our independent variables and pre-negotiation impressions, but excluded interactions between impressions of competence and impressions of warmth. Because the models included a large number of terms, we report only significant effects.

*Integrative issues.* We calculated the value of the female employee's contract for integrative issues (location, job assignment, base salary, incentives). Female employees' outcomes for integrative issues were affected by interactions between Information Sequence and Employer Gender,  $F(1,78) = 5.78, p < .05, \eta^2 = .09$ , Employer Gender and pre-negotiation competence,  $F(1,78) = 10.15, p < .001, \eta^2 = .15$ , and Employer Gender and pre-negotiation warmth,  $F(1,78) = 5.19, p < .05, \eta^2 = .08$ . Further, as shown in Figure 5, female employees' outcomes for integrative issues were affected by a 3-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content and pre-negotiation warmth,  $F(1,78) = 5.44, p < .05, \eta^2 = .09$ .



Figure 5

**Integrative outcomes as a function of Information Sequence, Information Content and pre-negotiation competence impressions**

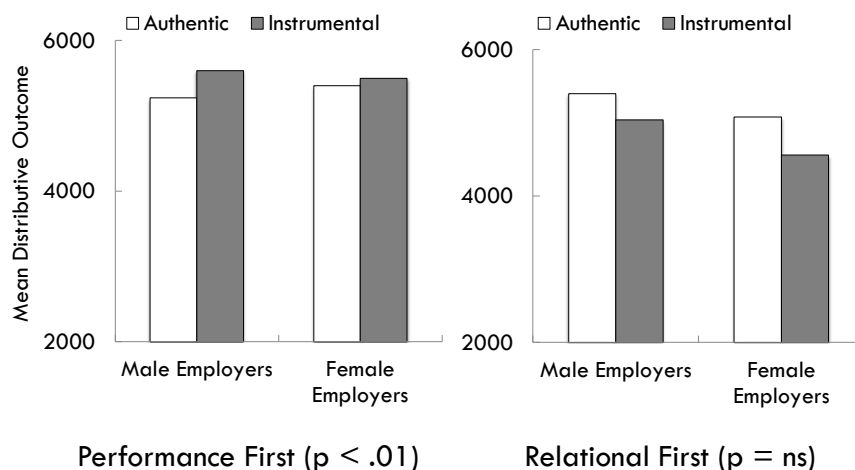


An analysis of simple effects, broken down by Information Sequence, showed that these variables affected outcomes when relational information was presented first,  $F(1,39) = 7.44$ ,  $p < .05$ , but not when performance information was presented first,  $F(1,39) = 0.39$ ,  $p = ns$ . When relational information was presented first, integrative outcomes were facilitated by convergence (a low-warmth first impression aligned with an instrumental attribution).

*Distributive issues.* We calculated the value of the contract for distributive issues (signing bonus, vacation, relocation). We found a main effect for Information Content,  $F(1,78) = 6.50$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ , such that outcomes were higher when relational behavior was authentic ( $M = 5280$ ,  $SD = 1355$ ) than when it was instrumental ( $M = 5175$ ,  $SD = 1358$ ). This main effect was qualified by a 3-way interaction between Information Sequence, Information Content, and Employer Gender,  $F(1,78) = 6.85$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ . An analysis of simple effects, broken down by Information Sequence, showed that Information Content and Employer Gender affected a female employee's outcomes when performance information was presented first,  $F(1,38) = 9.29$ ,  $p < .01$ , but not when relational information was presented first,  $F(1,39) = .48$ ,  $p = ns$ . As shown

in Figure 6, female employees obtained their worst outcomes in negotiations with a male employer when they conveyed an incongruent impression (Performance First, Authentic).

**Figure 6**  
**Distributive outcomes as a function of Information Sequence, Information Content and Employer Gender**



## Discussion

Results from Experiment 2 demonstrated that the information embedded in the female employee's reference letters anchored competence judgments and "seesawed" warmth judgments. Female employers (but not male employers) rated the negotiating female employee as high-warmth when they received performance information first and were convinced that her warmth was genuine; they rated the negotiating female as low-warmth when her warm behavior could be discounted as instrumental.

The attributional information only affected male employers in relation to negotiation outcomes. Female employees generated the worst distributive outcomes when their employers learned performance information first and had received an authentic explanation for her warmth. A different pattern emerged for integrative outcomes: Integrative outcomes were highest when relational information was presented first, and the employer's low-warmth impression aligned

with an instrumental explanation; integrative outcomes were lowest when the employer's high-warmth impression misaligned with that instrumental explanation.

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Women who engage in competent, agentic behavior usually lose warmth (Heilman et al., 1995; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). But a woman may experience greater leeway to engage in agentic behavior – including negotiating – if perceivers learn she has warm relational attributes (Bowles & Babcock, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). In this research, we examined whether the content of information that employers received about a female employee's performance and relational skills, and the sequence of that information, would affect the leeway given to negotiating women. We found that women's perceived warmth is affected by the attributions employers made about their performance and relational skills. However, the impact of this information is affected by the order in which employers receive performance and relational information, as well as the employer's gender. We also showed that information about women's relational and performance skills, in combination with pre-negotiation impressions of competence and warmth, affected their economic outcomes.

Our results suggest that employers used individuating information from external sources when it contrasted with the first piece of information that they received about an employee: The source of performance (individual or team) was important when it followed relational information (E1), and the source of relational behavior (authentic niceness or instrumental motives) was important when it followed performance information (E2). In both experiments, information content helped employers to interpret the data in relation to their initial anchor. Female employees' warmth was highest when relational information was reinforced by ambiguous team-based performance attributions (E1) or when performance information was

counterbalanced by authentic niceness (E2). This pattern of results suggests that the information women present *first* matters less than the information that *follows*: women benefit if they confirm their warmth by attributing performance to their team or if they offset individual performance by demonstrating genuine niceness. Our E1 finding converges with other recent research demonstrating that pre-negotiation information about a female negotiator's relational orientation can improve her social outcomes (Bowles & Babcock, 2013). But our E2 findings further suggest that perceivers recognize that warm behavior is controllable (Fiske et al., 2007) and react negatively if they feel they are being "played." Female employees received the lowest warmth ratings when performance information was followed by information that she had instrumental motives.

The pre-negotiation information effects on warmth were observed only for female employers. Women may be particularly attuned to assessing warmth in social encounters (Fiske et al., 2007) and they may have excessively high expectations for warm behavior in female-female interactions (Kulik et al., in press). As a result, female employers were more sensitive to information suggesting that a female employee's warmth was insincere. Consequently, women need to be especially attentive to the information that they present about themselves, and the order in which they present it, in their negotiations with other women.

Social outcomes are important in and of themselves. In real-world negotiations, the social outcomes that emerge from a first encounter between an employee and an employer set the tone for the employment relationship (Kulik & Olekalns, 2012). High-quality relationships may be particularly important for female employees because they are more likely than male employees to rely on their supervisors for mentoring (Baugh, Lankau & Scandura, 1996) and for assistance

in navigating formal organizational systems (Kidd & Smewing, 2001). However, in negotiations, both social and economic outcomes matter (Curhan, Elfenbein & Xu, 2006).

Pre-negotiation impressions and external sources of information affected outcomes on distributive issues more clearly than they affected outcomes on integrative issues. When performance information was presented first, employer gender interacted with pre-negotiation competence impressions (E1) and warmth attributions (E2). The clearest picture emerged when employers were also female. Female employees were able to obtain high distributive outcomes in negotiations with female employers unless the performance information conveyed by their reference letter was called into question by pre-negotiation impressions of low competence (E1). These findings suggest that, when faced with a clearly competent employee, female employers were willing to make considerable concessions on distributive issues. The picture is more nuanced when employers are male: Female employees improve their outcomes when they convey low competence (E1) and worsen their outcomes when their warmth is perceived as authentic (E2). These findings suggest that in negotiations with both women and men, female employees erode their outcomes if they convey “girliness” that invites exploitation (Glick & Croson, 2001; Solnick, 2001). However, the information used by women (low competence) and men (authentic warmth) to assess this vulnerability differs.

Pre-negotiation impressions of competence also affected value claiming when relational information was presented first. In E1, we found that female employees obtained the poorest outcomes when relational information was combined with individual performance information and employees were perceived to have high competence. The congruence between two sources of competence information may have elicited greater competition from employers for two reasons. First, the combined performance information presents a clear challenge to the female

employee's warmth. Negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information in warmth judgments (Baumeister et al., 2001; Reeder & Brewer, 1979). The competence information may have dislodged the employee's warmth "anchor" and discouraged employers from making concessions. Second, the impression of the female employee as highly competent, and negotiation's usual association with agentic behaviors (Kray, Reb, Galinsky & Thompson, 2004; Kray, Thompson & Galinsky, 2001), may have evoked male-stereotyped negotiation behaviors including competitiveness and value claiming. As a result, women who clearly signal their competence in the early stages of a negotiation may avoid triggering a more competitive process if they are able to shift attributions about their competence to their team (Tinsley et al., 2009).

Whereas pre-negotiations perceptions of competence were critical to value claiming (distributive issues), pre-negotiation perceptions of warmth proved critical to value creation on integrative ones (E2). When relational information was presented first, female employees benefited if they conveyed a congruent image to their employees: high pre-negotiation warmth impressions and attributions of authentic niceness *or* low pre-negotiation warmth impressions and attributions of instrumental motives increased female employees' outcomes on integrative issues. In particular, female employees benefited from conveying low warmth and instrumental motives against a background of positive early relational information. This pattern is consistent with the offset effects predicted by H6b, and suggests that women benefit most when they convey both niceness and toughness. This combination may have reduced employers' expectations of relationship-focused accommodating behavior during the negotiation, giving both the employer and the employee greater freedom to use preference tradeoffs to maximize

joint benefit (Miles & LaSalle, 2009). Freed from relational concerns, the negotiators were able to focus on their economic outcomes to mutual benefit (Amanatullah et al., 2008).

### **Practical Implications**

Our findings suggest several strategies that female negotiators can consider to improve their social and economic outcomes in negotiations. First, researchers have suggested that women may benefit from establishing their warmth at the start of employment relationships (Kulik & Olekalns, 2012). Our findings demonstrate that female negotiators clearly benefited from having their relational skills presented to female employers in pre-negotiation letters of reference – especially when relational behavior explained high performance (E1) and when relational behavior was presented as authentic (E2). This information may shield female employees during employment negotiations and allow them to negotiate favorable employment terms without losing warmth in the process.

Second, our findings suggest that female negotiators need to be aware of the consequences of negotiating with male vs female partners. In general, demographic similarity eases interpersonal interactions, facilitates communication, and builds friendships (Guillaume, Brodbeck & Riketta, 2012); it is easier for women to find common topics of conversation and generate pleasant interactions (Konrad, Cannings & Goldberg, 2010). But these positive effects of sex similarity may not be experienced within a negotiation context. The behavioral economics literature demonstrates that, in investment and trust games, members of same-sex dyads report higher levels of frustration (Schroth, Bain-Chekal & Caldwell, 2005), higher rates of retaliation and higher levels of competition (Sutter, Bosman, Kocher & van Winden, 2009) than members of mixed-sex dyads. Further, demographic similarity may be more effective in developing warmth than competence, and our E1 results suggest that competence impressions

are particularly important in affecting a female negotiator's economic outcomes. Female negotiators may need to manage competence impressions differently depending on the gender of their negotiation partner: Female negotiators benefit from highlighting competence in their negotiations with women but downplaying competence in their negotiations with men.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Like most negotiation research, we examined our predictions in a one-shot negotiation. We provided employers with brief excerpts from reference letters that established expectations of an employee's warmth and competence before the negotiation. However, ongoing workplace relationships involve repeated negotiations between an employee and her employer. In later negotiations, both parties' expectations are based on their shared history; these expectations, in turn, influence the interpretation of current behavior (O'Connor, Arnold & Burris, 2005). These relationship-based expectations are likely to have stronger effects than our manipulations, because they will be held with greater certainty and be more difficult to disconfirm within a single encounter. This observation suggests that it would be useful to study reputation effects on women's negotiation outcomes. In particular, researchers should consider how women can build reputations during their early negotiations that protect them from negative attributions in later ones, and how women can repair or regenerate reputations that are damaging their negotiation outcomes.

In our research, we focused on how first impressions and external information at the *start* of a negotiation affected negotiators' *final* outcomes. However, impressions are not static. Negotiators implement different strategies at different stages of the negotiation (Olekalns, Brett & Weingart, 2003) and impressions are revised repeatedly as the negotiation unfolds (Olekalns & Smith, 2005). Female negotiators may be able to leverage strategic points in a negotiation to



reframe their actions and alter opponents' attributions about their behavior (Kolb, 2004). We demonstrated that the pre-negotiation sequence of competence- and warmth-relevant information affected female negotiators' outcomes, but we have not considered whether female negotiators might benefit from introducing warmth and competence information at different points during a negotiation. Understanding the dynamics of impression formation and modification during the negotiation might be facilitated by experience sampling methodology, which would enable researchers to track how perceptions of the female negotiator's warmth and competence fluctuate over the course of the negotiation (Barry & Fulmer, 2004).

We presented one particular relational attribution for high performance by explaining that the female negotiator worked in a team environment. Heilman (2001) suggests that other structural arrangements (e.g., participation in an executive coaching program) might also provide a performance explanation that diverts perceivers' attention away from a woman's high competence. We suggest that future research contrast these "distraction" explanations against the team explanation to confirm that it is the relational content of the information that makes the difference. We also manipulated attributions of warmth by suggesting that the employee actively nurtured her personal relationships. However, other activities such as volunteering to help the sick (Heilman, 2012), engaging in organizational citizenship, and mentoring junior staff could also signal warmth. We recommend that researchers examine whether these other warmth-signaling behaviors, when interpreted as either instrumental or authentic, have parallel effects on female negotiators' outcomes. In combination, these future research directions would identify a portfolio of options that will help women negotiate effectively to gain both social and economic outcomes.

## APPENDIX A

### Relational and Performance Information (Experiment 1)

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#### Relational Information

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“... Her interpersonal skills are excellent. She always has time for her employees, and, in general, is a very friendly and positive person. Her colleagues describe her as an involved manager who is caring and sensitive to her co-workers’ and employees’ needs. She emphasizes the importance of having a supportive work environment and has been commended for her efforts to promote a positive community. She encourages cooperation and helpful behavior and has worked hard to increase her co-workers’ sense of belonging...”

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#### Performance Information, Individual

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“...She is highly qualified, having not only a Master of Business Administration but extensive skills and experience in financial management and consulting. In fact, she graduated in the top 5% of her class. As the Senior Project Manager, her performance is assessed against the organization’s quarterly targets for client fees. She is highly successful in doing this. Not only does she meet her assigned targets every quarter, she frequently exceeds them. In the last quarter, she exceeded her target for client fees by \$250,000. This means she is one of the organization’s top revenue generators. As a result, she regularly receives high personal performance bonuses.”

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#### Performance Information, Team

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“... She is highly qualified, having not only Master of Business Administration but extensive skills and experience in financial management and consulting. In fact, she graduated in the top 5% of her class. As the Senior Project Manager, the performance of her team is assessed against the organization’s quarterly targets for client fees. Her team is highly successful in doing this. Not only does the team meet its assigned targets every quarter, the team frequently exceeds them. In the last quarter, the team exceeded their target for client fees by \$250,000. This means the team is one of the organization’s top revenue generators. As a result, her team regularly receives a high team-based performance bonus.”

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## APPENDIX B

### Relational Information (Experiment 2)

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#### Relational Information, Authentic

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“.....She has a sincere, down to earth personality and fantastic natural interpersonal skills. She is a “people person.” These skills have led to an extensive network of contacts, a flow-on effect of her interest in those around her. She is able to connect people and groups who wouldn’t ordinarily meet. She is the “go to” person when her colleagues need a new business contact. She is interested in the lives of those around her and enjoys staying in touch with everyone in her network. She remembers the birthdays and hobbies of her contacts and their families, always sending birthday greetings and information about their hobbies that she comes across. She says she spends time in getting to know smart people because she enjoys having friends who are good quality, talented people and who offer her intellectual stimulation. She often has lunch with people in her network because she enjoys their company.”

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#### Relational Information, Instrumental

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“..... She has fantastic interpersonal skills, which she has worked hard to build by specifically targeting professional development workshops and other events that develop her communication, influence and networking skills. These skills have helped her to strategically expand her network. Her network enables her to connect people and groups who wouldn’t ordinarily meet. She is the “go to” person when her colleagues need a new business connection. She has developed an extensive data base that helps her track her most recent communication with those in her network and ensures she does not neglect her network contacts. She records the birthdays and hobbies of her contacts and their families so that she can add a personal touch to her business communications. She says she invests time in getting to know smart people because they are the business leaders of the future and are likely to give her a business advantage. She is conscientious about having lunch or coffee with her contacts to ensure they do not drop out of her network.....”

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