

# **Women and Motivation to Compete: The Role of Advantages**

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The paper investigates the stability of the gender difference in preferences for competition and tests a possible factor that influences it: the discrepancy in the distribution of advantages. Subjects play bargaining games where two roles differ by decision contest. In one role the subject has an advantageous position in terms of strategy and earnings, in the other s/he is on the disadvantaged side. Subjects are randomly assigned to be in the advantaged or disadvantaged role for all the experiment. Competition takes place between subjects who are in the same role and it is based on the payoff they obtain in the bargaining. By comparing competitive behaviour of subjects assigned to the advantaged role or not, the experiment identifies the effect of having advantages, given the remaining factors. The main result is that behaviour is more rational and does not differ by gender when in the advantaged position, while when disadvantaged the gender gap in competitiveness exists and it causes inefficiencies. Giving an advantageous role makes men with low performances in the game compete less and women with high performances compete more, closing down the total gender gap. This finding helps to explain the competitiveness gap and provides insights on which are the characteristics of the context that make competition detrimental for gender parity and also for efficiency.