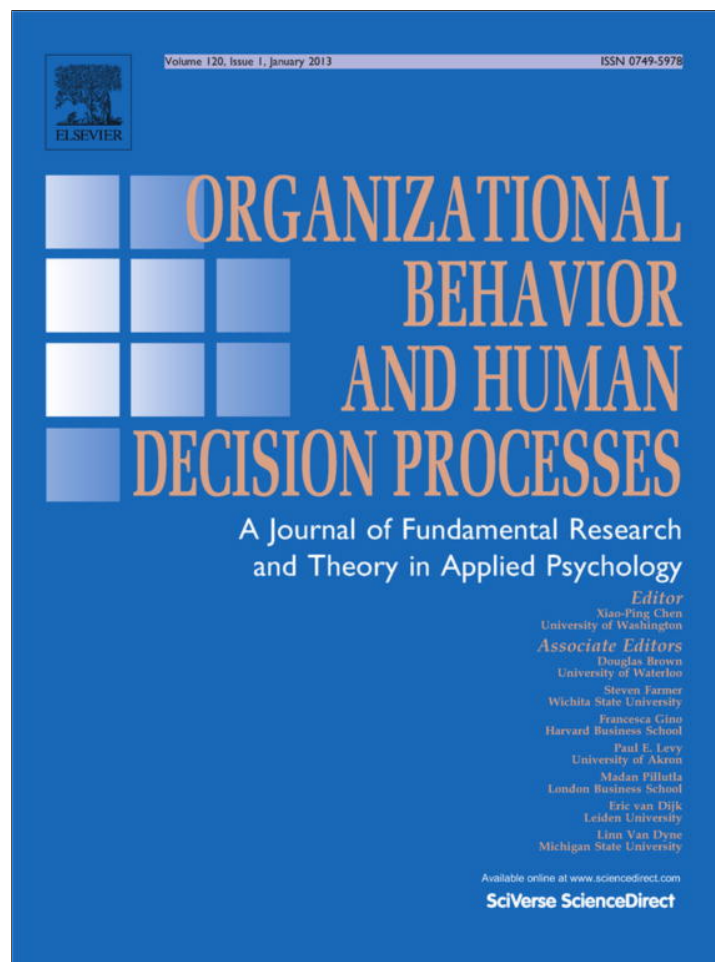


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## Punishing female negotiators for asserting too much...or not enough: Exploring why advocacy moderates backlash against assertive female negotiators

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## ABSTRACT

We complement prior findings that self-advocating female negotiators are reluctant to assert their interests and subsequently suffer financial repercussions, relative to other-advocating females, self-advocating males, and other-advocating males, by showing that self-advocating female negotiators who do assert their interests suffer negative social judgments (i.e., backlash). We use nascent theory on societal norms for the behavior of each gender to explain why advocacy context moderates backlash. We show that assertive, self-advocating women suffer a social backlash (for example, decreased likability) because their behavior is associated with high negative masculine and low positive feminine characterizations. Non-assertive, other-advocating women suffer a leadership backlash (for example, lower presumed competency) because their behavior is associated with high negative feminine and low positive masculine characterizations. Interestingly, male negotiators do not suffer any backlash consequences despite being characterized in a fashion similar to that of the females in each condition.

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## Introduction

Backlash is a negative reaction against women whose behavior violates gender norms (Rudman, 1998). Women suffer from the backlash effect when their behavior is seen as “too masculine” (Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001), i.e., dominant or self-promotional (Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Spence & Sawin, 1985), as when they take on leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). For example, female managers are judged as more hostile than male managers (Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995), described as bitter and deceitful (Deal & Stevenson, 1998), and deemed to lack expected communal qualities (Heilman, 2001).

The backlash effect helps to explain the struggles women experience in masculine domains that require agentic behavior or self-focus (assertiveness, self-promotion) (Bakan, 1966). For women to be perceived as competent, they must act agentially (rather than communally or other-focused), but such actions undercut their odds of success. Many studies show that agentic women are routinely penalized (not hired, overlooked for promotions) relative to male managers not because they lack competence but because they are seen as socially unskilled and unlikable (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991; Heilman, 2001; Lyness & Judiesch, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Sonnett & Holton, 1996).

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This gives rise to the perception that female managers are “damned if they do and doomed if they don’t” (Catalyst, 2007). Those who act agentially are seen as competent but unlikable; those who act communally are viewed as likable but incompetent.

In negotiations, agentic behavior is operationalized as negotiator assertiveness (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007); assertive, value-claiming negotiation strategies are self-focused and help negotiators reap rewards in distributive negotiations (Raiffa, 1982). Research has shown that women are less likely to engage in assertive negotiation behavior because they fear negative judgments related to being unlikable (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2007). Perhaps it is this fear of being unlikable that propels women to use strategies that undermine their success, as meta-analyses show women fare worse than men in many negotiations, especially in distributive contexts (Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999; Walters, Stuhlmacher, & Meyer, 1998).

Recent research hints that a way out of this seeming likability vs. competence dilemma for women is to frame a negotiation in terms of benefits to others. When negotiating *on behalf of another individual*, women are assertive (similar in style to male negotiators) and successful (reaping similar financial benefits for the person they are advocating for) (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005). Yet prior research has not measured counterpart reactions to such behavior, thus leaving it unclear whether female negotiators successfully maneuvered out of the competence vs. likeability dilemma. Level of backlash against assertive female negotiators has been inferred but not tested.

Moreover, the underlying characterizations that may give rise to the backlash have not been previously explored.

Two plausible explanations could drive the observed success of female other-advocates. First, other-advocating women may suffer a backlash similar to self-advocates for their assertiveness, but are willing to incur these social repercussions for the sake of negotiating a favorable outcome for their principal. Alternatively, assertive women who are negotiating on behalf of others may not suffer a backlash, thereby freeing them to act assertively with impunity. By measuring counterpart reactions to assertive negotiation behavior we can test for levels of backlash across different situations.

Further, by exploring the underlying characterizations that can give rise to backlash against assertive, non-assertive, self-advocating, and other-advocating negotiators, we offer new insights on the more basic likability vs. competence dilemma. Recent theory on gendered role expectations explains that gender roles suggest not only prescriptions (positive masculine characterizations of competence and positive feminine characterizations of likability) but also proscriptions (negative masculine characterizations of dominance and arrogance, and negative feminine characterizations of weakness and gullibility) (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman, Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Nauts, 2010). As we expound below, these clusters carry gender descriptors but are presumed to be valid in characterizing the behavior of both men and women.

We argue that judgments of competence should be associated not only with high positive masculine characteristics typically studied in extant research but also with low negative feminine characteristics, whereas judgments of likeability should be associated not only with high positive feminine characteristics typically studied in extant research but also with low negative masculine characteristics. Our results confirm these predictions and show the different descriptors lead to different types of backlash, thus offering theoretical advances to the double bind between women's competence and likability. Further, our results extend the aforementioned findings on advocacy context by showing that even though assertive, other-advocating women suffer little backlash, *non-assertive* other-advocating women do incur backlash. Finally, by comparing evaluations of women against those of comparably behaving men, we show that males can suffer similar negative characterizations but are able to escape backlash effects.

### Moderation of backlash by advocacy

Evidence for backlash against women who adopt masculine behavioral styles currently resides primarily in the domain of self-advocacy (a woman trying to get a job, get promoted, lead others, or negotiate for herself). Research has observed that women negotiate just as effectively as men when they are doing so on behalf of others (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2005), meaning that the principal for whom they were advocating experienced no financial penalty. Measuring negotiators' own anticipations of how their counterpart will judge them, research has found that female negotiators in a self-advocacy context fear social sanctions if they behave assertively (Bowles et al., 2007) and that female negotiators in an other-advocacy context do not (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010). However, it is unclear whether this feeling of comfort is warranted, as empirical research has yet to measure actual counterpart reactions.

We believe that counterparts' judgments of negotiators will be influenced by expectations about how negotiators should or should not behave (e.g., Berger, Conner, & Fiske, 1974) and that these expectations will differ based on negotiator gender in ways consistent with social role theory (Eagly, 1987). Traditionally, men have occupied societal roles enhanced by self-advocacy (e.g., corporate climber, powerful boss, authoritative father), and women have acted as other-advocates (e.g., encouraging wife, supportive

assistant, prodding mother). These socially legitimized roles form expectations for how men and women ought to behave (Eagly, 1987). Expectations about various gender-appropriate roles develop early in life through family (Ex & Janssens, 1998) and other forms of cultural socialization (Wade, 2001).

The expectation that women advocate for others should protect women from backlash when they negotiate assertively on behalf of someone else. Though the behavior of negotiating assertively is typically considered "masculine" (see Kray & Thompson, 2005), when this behavior is directed towards a socially sanctioned end state (protection and nurturance of others), the perception of norm violation will be mitigated. Generally accepted standards of behavior that bind members of a social group (see, Coleman, 1988), norms are used to socialize members and enforce conformity by punishing deviance (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004). If the feminine role is one of supporter, then women who assertively advocate for others are no longer violating normative expectations but rather conforming to them. Thus, assertive women advocating for others need not be punished for deviant behavior and will suffer less backlash than those negotiating for themselves. This mitigation of backlash against assertive other-advocating women could explain the financial success of such negotiators found in prior research.

**Hypothesis 1a.** Advocacy (self vs. other) will moderate the extent to which assertive women incur backlash. Specifically, assertive female negotiators advocating for others will suffer less backlash than assertive female negotiators advocating for themselves.

Given that the feminine role is one of supporter, women who advocate for another but do so weakly might suffer a backlash for violating expectations of nurturing behavior. Thus, we predict that other-advocating women who negotiate non-assertively will be perceived as violating gender role expectations by not living up to the role of supporting others.

**Hypothesis 1b.** Assertiveness will moderate the extent to which other-advocating women incur backlash. Specifically, non-assertive female negotiators advocating for others will suffer more backlash than assertive female negotiators advocating for others.

### Unpacking the social constraints on female negotiators

Most backlash research looks at the dichotomy of masculinity and femininity. It argues that when women confirm competency in traditionally masculine domains, such as leadership, through overt demonstrations of assertive behavior, they are socially sanctioned for violating feminine prescriptions that dictate how women "should" be behave (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Gill, 2004; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Recently, Prentice and Carranza (2002) argue that exclusive focus on gender prescriptions (how members of each gender "should" behave) does not adequately address the importance of gender proscriptions (how members of each gender "ought not" behave), which may carry harsher punishment for violations. In their framework, people should behave consistent with gender prescriptions while being especially cautious to avoid violating gender proscriptions. Beginning with gender prescriptions, men are associated with the positive masculine attributions of independence, ambition, and industriousness, and women with the positive the feminine attributions of warmth, friendliness, and helpfulness (see also Basow, 1986; Fiske, 1998; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002; Schein, 2001; Spence & Buckner, 2000; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Spence & Sawin, 1985; Williams & Best, 1990). As for gender proscriptions, men are associated with the negative masculine attributions of dominance, entitlement, and arrogance, and women with the negative feminine attributions by naïveté, insecurity, and weakness (see also Bakan, 1966; Bem, 1974; Rudman et al., 2010).

Both men and women are subject to evaluation based on these masculine and feminine descriptors. Prentice and Carranza (2002) argue that, to be viewed positively by others, women should embody positive feminine characteristics and should strongly avoid negative masculine characterizations. Such proscriptions are especially toxic for women because they are both negative and stereotypically male behaviors. Similarly, to be viewed positively, men should embody positive masculine characteristics and strive to avoid negative feminine characterizations that embody gender inappropriate behavior.

Drawing on this work, we move beyond prior gender backlash studies to empirically demonstrate the mix of gender prescriptions and proscriptions that lead to different types of backlash against women based on negotiation style and advocacy. An assertive negotiation style is overtly focused on claiming value, bargaining competitively, and the aggressive pursuit of one's interests (as opposed to a more cooperative, problem-solving, value-creating approach) (Lax & Sebenius, 1986). An assertive negotiator should therefore be characterized as more aggressive and dominant (negative masculine traits) as well as more independent and ambitious (positive masculine traits) relative to a non-assertive negotiator. However, we argue that advocacy moderates these attributions for women. Assertive women advocating for others confirm gender role expectations of being supportive and nurturing, while assertive women who advocate for themselves violate these gender role expectations. Therefore, the former negotiators should effectively avoid negative masculine attributions relative to the latter.

**Hypothesis 2.** When negotiating assertively, (a) both self-advocating and other-advocating women will be judged higher on negative and positive masculine characteristics than non-assertive women, but (b) self-advocating women will be judged higher on negative masculine characteristics than other-advocating women.

Relatedly, a non-assertive negotiation style is typically characterized as soft and oriented toward creating joint value (Fischer, Ury, & Patton, 1991). Based on Pruitt's (1983) dual concern model (see also Rahim, 1983), assertive negotiators have a dominant or forceful orientation (high concern for self), and non-assertive negotiators have either a cooperative (high concern for self and other) or accommodating orientation (high concern for other). In the former case, a negotiator likely will be viewed as warm and friendly (positive feminine traits). In the latter, a negotiator could also be seen as submissive and weak (negative feminine traits). Indeed, negotiators with a reputation for cooperation can be seen as both friendly and gullible (O'Connor and Tinsley, 2011). Thus, non-assertive negotiators will receive more positive and negative feminine characterizations relative to assertive negotiators.

Again, advocacy should moderate these attributions. Because they violate expectations of being nurturing supporters, non-assertive other-advocating women will be seen in a more negative light for not doing enough to help their principals. We predict that other-advocating women who act non-assertively will be rated higher on negative feminine attributes than will non-assertive, self-advocating women, who will be seen as confirming gendered expectations with their behavior.

**Hypothesis 3.** When negotiating non-assertively, (a) both self-advocating and other-advocating women will be judged higher on positive and negative feminine characteristics than assertive women, but (b) other-advocating women will be judged higher on negative feminine characteristics than self-advocating women.

Given that these gender pre- and proscriptions should explain why backlash occurs for female advocates for both self and other, these characterizations should mediate the relationship between advocacy and backlash. We predicted backlash against assertive, self-advocating women (H1a) and non-assertive other-advocating women (H1b). With regard to the former, in a self-advocacy con-

text, judgments that an assertive woman is high on negative masculine characteristics should explain the backlash against her. By contrast, in an other-advocacy context, judgments that a non-assertive woman is high on negative feminine characteristics should explain the tendency to engage in backlash against her.

**Hypothesis 4.** Negative gender attributions (e.g., gender proscriptions) will mediate the relationship between advocacy and backlash against negotiation style.

We test our hypotheses in three empirical studies. The first tests Hypotheses 1a and 1b, the second tests Hypotheses 2 and 3, and the third tests all four hypotheses and includes mediation tests to determine whether gendered attributions explain the likelihood of backlash against female negotiators. Conspicuously absent are hypotheses about male negotiators. This asymmetry is consistent with past research that finds men enjoy greater latitude of behavioral expression (Rudman & Glick, 1999) based on their higher social status (Carli & Eagly, 1999). We include male negotiators for comparison in Studies 1 and 3 but offer no solid theory on which to ground a priori predictions about how they will be judged.

## Study 1

The purpose of this study is to test whether assertive, self-advocating female negotiators and non-assertive, other-negotiating female negotiators suffer backlash compared to other negotiators (Hypotheses 1a and 1b, respectively). We compare how participants react to men and women negotiating for self vs. other using either an assertive or a non-assertive style.

### Method

#### Participants

Data for this study were collected from 226 participants recruited on campus at an East Coast university. The sample consisted of 112 (49.6%) male participants and 114 (50.4%) female participants with a median age of 22 years old.

#### Procedure

A scenario spanning five rounds of a salary negotiation was used to collect data on how people react to the assertive behavior of negotiators based on gender and advocacy. We manipulated target negotiator sex (Mark vs. Mary), advocacy context (self vs. other), and negotiation style (assertive vs. non-assertive), yielding a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  between-subjects design.<sup>1</sup> In all conditions, participants were instructed to envision themselves in the role of a hiring manager in the salary negotiation. Participants experienced the negotiation round by round. They read their offer and the negotiator's counteroffer (which were static across conditions) and then clicked to the next screen to advance to the next round of the negotiation. This continued for five rounds. After going through all five rounds of the exchange, participants were then asked how they would interact with the target negotiator in both social and work contexts.

#### Hypothesis variables

*Gender of target negotiator.* Participants were randomly assigned to a scenario detailing a negotiation against Mark (male) or Mary (female).

*Advocacy.* Participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario that either involved a self-advocating negotiator or an other-advocating negotiator.

<sup>1</sup> We also manipulated whether the principal was male (Josh) or female (Sarah), but because analyses showed no differences based on target of principal, data was collapsed across these conditions, and for the sake of simplicity, we present the  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  design.

cating negotiator. Self-advocating negotiators were new recruits negotiating a starting salary on their own behalf. Other-advocating targets were colleagues within the same organization who had referred the new hire for the job.

**Negotiation style.** Negotiator assertiveness was manipulated using scripts previously developed and pre-tested by Amanatullah and Morris (2010).<sup>2</sup> Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in which the negotiator behaved either assertively or non-assertively during the negotiation. In each round of the negotiation, two statements were presented as direct quotations from the target negotiator, one responding to the hiring manager's offer and the other justifying the negotiator's next counteroffer, for a total of eight statements manipulated based on assertiveness. The assertive style condition used adjectives such as "insulting" and "unreasonable" in response to the hiring manager's offer, and the non-assertive condition used phrases such as "I appreciate that offer" and "thank you" to demonstrate softness. When making counteroffers, assertive negotiators used threats such as "may be forced to accept a position at another company" and "refuse to work for less," whereas non-assertive negotiators made more gentle statements, such as, "I was hoping you might find this salary reasonable." All statements are reproduced in Appendix A, which also shows how these statements were altered across the self- and other-advocacy conditions.

**Backlash.** Backlash was measured following the negotiation. We developed items to capture both work-based and social-based sanctions (see Appendix B). Responses varied on a scale from 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("Extremely"). The wording of the items is such that a lower score actually indicates a greater tendency to backlash; as such, we reverse coded all items so that a higher score would represent a greater inclination to engage in backlash against the target. Both subscales had high reliability (work-based:  $\alpha = .88$ ; personal:  $\alpha = .87$ ), yet were also highly correlated ( $r = .74, p < .001$ ). Given this high correlation, and because the pattern of results was similar for both scales, they were collapsed into a single measure of generalized backlash for the following analyses ( $\alpha = .91$ ;  $M = 3.71, SD = 1.22$ ). In addition, a Principal Components Analysis confirmed that the six items loaded onto a single factor accounting for 70% of the variance.

#### Control variable

**Backlash against principal.** If, consistent with Hypothesis 1a, other-advocating female negotiators are not punished for behaving assertively, an alternate explanation may be that the target negotiator herself does not incur backlash because those negative feelings are directed instead toward the principal—the person on whose behalf they are negotiating. To be sure that the principal was not punished, we measured participants' desire to interact with this principal using the same six-item backlash measure described above ( $\alpha = .87$ ;  $M = 3.72, SD = 0.88$ ).

#### Results

##### Hypothesis testing

To test Hypotheses 1a and b—whether assertive, self-advocating female negotiators and non-assertive, other-advocating female negotiators suffer backlash—we subjected our backlash measure to an ANOVA with gender of negotiator (male vs. female), advocacy

(self vs. other), and negotiation style (assertive vs. non-assertive) as the independent variables. There was a marginally significant main effect for gender. Male negotiators suffered less backlash than female negotiators (*male negotiator*:  $M = 3.56, SD = 1.19$  vs. *female negotiator*:  $M = 3.86, SD = 1.24$ ;  $t_{(224)} = 1.87, p = .063$ ). There were no other significant main effects or two-way interactions. However, consistent with H1a and H1b, there was a significant three-way interaction of gender, advocacy, and negotiation style ( $F_{(1,218)} = 6.08$ ;  $p = .01$ ). Fig. 1 plots this interaction.

Because interpreting which differences drive a triple interaction can be complex, to better understand its nature we conducted multiple pairwise mean comparisons between experimental conditions using Least Significant Difference *t*-tests. Within the assertive condition, self-advocating female negotiators were punished more than all three other groups (*female self*:  $M = 4.39, SD = 1.27$  vs. *male self*:  $M = 3.83, SD = 1.00, t_{(50)} = 1.80, p = .084$ ; vs. *female other*:  $M = 3.61, SD = 1.24, t_{(56)} = 2.37, p = .021$ ; vs. *male other*:  $M = 3.57, SD = 1.15, t_{(56)} = 2.60, p = .012$ ), confirming Hypothesis 1a. Moreover, in the non-assertive condition, other-advocating female negotiators were punished for *not* asserting themselves compared to the remaining three conditions (*female other*:  $M = 4.20, SD = 1.22$  vs. *female self*:  $M = 3.29, SD = 0.93, t_{(55)} = 3.18, p = .002$ ; vs. *male self*:  $M = 3.51, SD = 1.30, t_{(56)} = 2.08, p = .042$ ; vs. *male other*:  $M = 3.38, SD = 1.30, t_{(53)} = 2.42, p = .019$ ), confirming Hypothesis 1b. These same patterns of effects remained significant when Bonferroni corrections for multiple comparisons were included. There were no differences in how male negotiators were rated based on either who they advocated for or the assertiveness of their negotiation behavior.

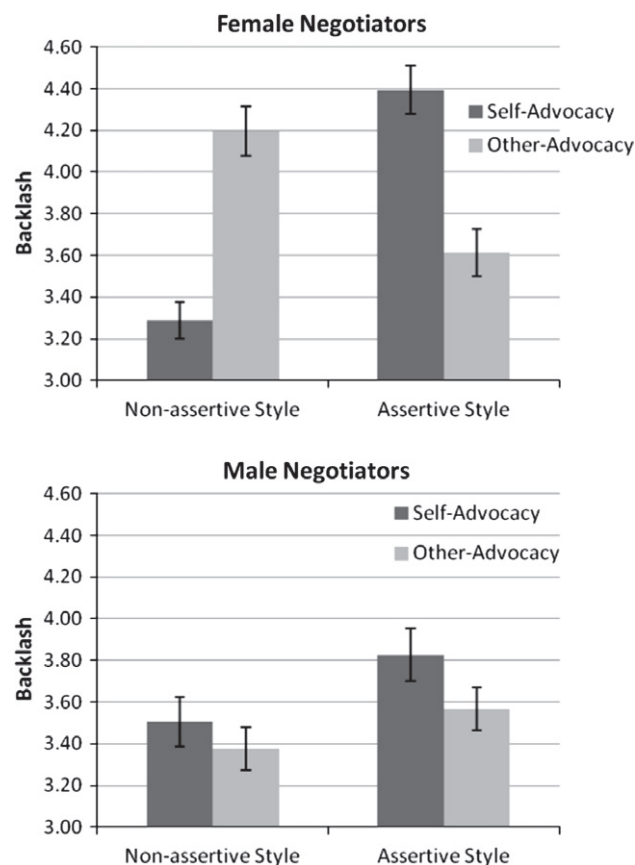


Fig. 1. Study 1: Social backlash against male and female negotiators by advocacy and negotiation style. Note: Bars represent mean ratings for each condition. Vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

<sup>2</sup> This paper pretested materials by constructing five kinds of responses to negotiation offers: assertive, entitled, qualification-based, cooperative, or dejected/hopeful. Their pilot testing consisted of respondents rating a series of negotiation behaviors on the respondents' willingness to engage in that behavior during a salary negotiation and how they would categorize that behavior relative to the five categories. Behaviors that received a mean willingness to use score above 5 (on a 7 point scale) and consistent categorization scores were included in their study. For the purposes of our study, we used the statements from the assertive category as our operationalization of assertive negotiation style and statements from the hopeful/dejected category for non-assertive style.

### Testing alternative explanations

Perhaps assertive, other-advocating female negotiators were not punished because they were not the appropriate target for backlash; participants may have punished the principals instead. Contrary to this alternative explanation, clients of assertive, other-advocating female negotiators were not punished either (*client of assertive, other-advocating male*:  $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.80$  vs. *client of assertive, other-advocating female*:  $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ;  $t_{(58)} = -0.68$ ;  $p = .501$ ). We also tested whether male or female participants were more or less likely to engage in backlash against our targets. We found no statistical differences in the backlash ratings made by men and women (*men*:  $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = 1.20$  vs. *women*:  $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ,  $t_{(224)} = 0.94$ ,  $p = .350$ ).

### Discussion

Advocacy moderates backlash against female negotiators' assertiveness. Extending prior research, our results show not only that assertive, self-advocating women incur backlash but that non-assertive, other-advocating women can suffer backlash too. This backlash was operationalized as a tendency to reduce social interaction with norm-violating negotiators in both work-based and personal domains. This suggests that the penalty for violating gender roles is not confined to the situation where the violation takes place, but may instead holistically affect a perceiver's basic social evaluation of the target individual.

Notably, reactions toward the male negotiators were completely void of contextual influence (by advocacy or negotiation style). Male negotiators were evaluated the same across all conditions (and evaluated marginally better than females, overall). As noted, this asymmetry is consistent with work on leadership evaluations (Rudman & Glick, 1999). Given that women, but not men, were constrained by injunctive gender roles, both as self-advocates (constraining assertiveness) and as other-advocates (constraining non-assertiveness), our next study tries to explain these social constraints by exploring the underlying negative characterizations made by counterparts.

### Study 2

To test the underlying attributions driving the backlash effects of Study 1, we replicated the original study design but measured perceptual impressions drawn of female negotiators, focusing both on positive and negative masculine and feminine characteristics. Given our observation in Study 1 that men suffered no backlash effects, we simplify our design here to target only female negotiators. Specifically, we are interested in whether assertive, self-advocating women are rated higher on negative masculine characteristics (H2b) relative to assertive, other-advocating women, and whether non-assertive, other-advocating women are rated higher on negative feminine characteristics (H3b) relative to non-assertive, self-advocating women.

### Methods

#### Participants

Data for this study were collected from 123 participants who completed the experiment for extra credit in an introductory management class. The sample consisted of 61 (49.6%) men and 62 (50.4%) women with an average age of 21.16 ( $SD = 2.38$ ).

#### Procedure

The procedure was the same as in Study 1, except: (1) the target negotiator was always female, and (2) after reading through each round before proceeding to the next, participants rated the

negotiator on four traits—one positive and one negative masculine trait, and one positive and one negative feminine trait. At the end of the study, participants answered numerous questions about their impressions of the negotiator on these four dimensions (positive and negative masculinity and femininity).

#### Variables

**Advocacy.** The same advocacy manipulation used in Study 1 was employed in this study: the self-advocating negotiator was described as a new recruit negotiating her own salary, and the other-advocating negotiator was described as the referring employee charged with negotiating salary on behalf of the new hire.

**Negotiation style.** The same manipulation of assertive and non-assertive negotiation style was used in this study as in Study 1.

**Gender characterizations.** We used a shortened version of Rudman et al.'s (2010) measure of gender prescriptions and proscriptions to operationalize positive and negative characterizations of masculinity and femininity. The original scale included over 50 items, which would have taxed participants. We chose 2–3 items from each of the four subscales with high factor loadings based on their data and with the greatest face validity to negotiations to administer in our study. After the final round, participants were asked to rate the extent to which this series of adjectives described the target negotiator on a scale from 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("Extremely"). The adjectives used to measure positive masculine characterizations included "Independent" and "Good Business Sense" ( $\alpha = .78$ ;  $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ). The adjectives used to measure positive feminine characterizations included "Sensitive to others," "Warm," and "Friendly" ( $\alpha = .82$ ;  $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ). The adjectives used to measure negative masculine characterizations included "Dominating," "Arrogant," and "Angry" ( $\alpha = .80$ ;  $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ). The adjectives used to measure negative feminine characterizations included "Insecure," "Naïve," and "Gullible" ( $\alpha = .70$ ;  $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ).

In addition, we measured perceptions after each round using ratings on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "Not at all" to 7 = "Extremely") of the negotiator's: assertiveness (manipulation check), ambition (positive masculine trait), entitlement (negative masculine trait), reasonableness (positive feminine trait), and conciliatory nature (negative feminine trait).

### Results

#### Manipulation check

To test the manipulation of assertive and non-assertive negotiation style, we used a repeated measures ANOVA with participants' ratings of the negotiator's assertiveness after each round as the within-subjects repeated measure, and advocacy (self vs. other) and negotiation style (assertive vs. non-assertive) as the between-subjects independent variables. Results showed a significant main effect for negotiation style ( $F_{(1,90)} = 4.45$ ,  $p = .04$ ). Negotiators in the assertive condition ( $M = 5.15$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) were characterized as significantly more assertive than negotiators in the non-assertive condition ( $M = 4.80$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ).

#### Hypothesis testing

To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, we subjected the global measures of gender attributions taken at the end of the experiment (positive masculine, negative masculine, positive feminine, and negative feminine characteristics) to a MANOVA with advocacy (self vs. other) and negotiation style (assertive vs. non-assertive) as the independent variables. Result showed the multivariate  $F$ 's were significant for both negotiation style ( $F_{(4,116)} = 10.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and

the interaction of advocacy and negotiation style ( $F_{(4,116)} = 2.08$ ,  $p = .05$ ).

Consistent with H2a and H3a, univariate  $F$ -tests revealed a main effect for negotiation style on the masculine positive scale ( $F_{(1,119)} = 4.68$ ,  $p = .03$ ), the masculine negative scale ( $F_{(1,119)} = 36.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the feminine positive scale ( $F_{(4,116)} = 12.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Specifically, assertive negotiators were attributed with more positive masculine characteristics (e.g., independent, leadership ability) ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) relative to non-assertive negotiators ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ). They were also attributed with more negative masculine characteristics (e.g., dominant, arrogant) ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) relative to non-assertive negotiators ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ), providing full support for H2a. Similarly, non-assertive negotiators were attributed with more positive feminine characteristics (e.g., warm, friendly) ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ) relative to assertive negotiators ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), consistent with H3a.

Controlling for these main effects, the interaction of advocacy and negotiation style was significant for both the negative masculine and negative feminine scales, offering support for Hypotheses 2b and 3b. Specifically, the univariate  $F$  for the interaction term was marginally significant on the negative masculine scale ( $F_{(1,119)} = 2.12$ ,  $p = .07$ ). To directly test Hypothesis 2b, we selected for only assertive negotiators and found that self-advocates ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) were rated higher on negative masculine characteristics than other-advocates ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ;  $F_{(1,67)} = 1.80$ ,  $p = .05$  one-tailed given directional hypothesis). The univariate  $F$  for the interaction of advocacy by negotiation style was significant on the negative feminine scale ( $F_{(1,119)} = 4.89$ ,  $p = .03$ ). To directly test Hypothesis 3b, we selected for only non-assertive negotiators and found that other-advocates ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) were rated higher on negative feminine characteristics than self-advocates ( $M = 2.30$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ;  $F_{(1,52)} = 3.43$ ,  $p = .04$ ).

#### Supplemental analyses

We tested for the robustness of our findings using the additional measures of gender attributions taken after each round of the negotiations. Each rating was subject to a repeated-measures ANOVA with round as the within-subjects repeated measure and advocacy and negotiation style as the between-subjects independent variables. The positive characteristics showed no significant main or interaction effects. However, consistent with our predictions and the findings above, both negative masculine and negative feminine characterizations were influenced by negotiation style (H2a and H3a) and by the interaction of advocacy and negotiation style (H2b and H3b). The interaction patterns were consistent with those above but did not all reach statistical significance.<sup>3</sup> We take these findings as further evidence in support of our predictions but acknowledge the limitations of using single-item measures.

As in Study 1, we tested for the effects of respondent gender on both the repeated measures and on the four gender attribution scales. There were no significant differences in ratings made by male and female respondents.

#### Discussion

Study 2 offers insights into why assertive, self-advocating female negotiators and non-assertive, other-advocating female negotiators are targets of the backlash effect. Namely, when women adopt traditionally masculine behaviors (i.e., assertive negotiating) in service to the self, they are attributed negative masculine traits (e.g., dominance, arrogance, and entitlement). Notably, in the assertive condition, both self- and other-advocates were credited with the positive associations of masculinity based on

their assertive behavior (e.g., independence and good leadership), but assertive self-advocating women also incurred significantly greater negative masculine attributions, mirroring the pattern of backlash effects observed in Study 1. We argue that this is because, in masculine contexts such as assertive bargaining, women engaging in behaviors that violate normative expectations open themselves up to negative masculine criticisms. This process is attenuated when women couple this masculine behavior with more gender-appropriate behavior (advocating for others).

On the other hand, when women fit into their traditional role as other-advocates but fail to do so assertively, they are punished for not confirming this role with their behavior and are given negative feminine traits (e.g., weakness). Notably, in the non-assertive condition, both self- and other-advocates were credited with the positive associations of femininity based on their non-assertive behavior (e.g., warmth and friendliness), but the non-assertive other-advocating women also incurred greater negative feminine attributions. We argue that this is because when enacting a feminine role (other-advocate), those who do not appear to fully execute this role open themselves up to negative feminine criticisms of weakness.

Although Study 2 offers initial insights for the various backlash effects (assertive, self-advocating women are seen as arrogant, and non-assertive, other-advocating women are seen as weak), our results were not fully significant. The round-by-round variables might have suffered from an anchoring effect, whereby participants making an initial rating of the female target based on little behavioral data did not show strong priming effects. Because participants then rated her on the same adjective after each round, demands for evaluation consistency may have inhibited large final effects. Another possibility is that a written vignette may not have been strong enough to trigger attribution biases with measurable effects, since attribution biases can be more difficult to capture than intentions to behave (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which is the backlash effect we captured in Study 1. Given the general support for our hypotheses, we sought to design a richer stimulus to better capture the underlying mechanism of gendered attributions. In the following study, we also reintroduce male negotiators as a comparison and directly test for mediation between the gendered attributions and backlash across conditions.

#### Study 3

Study 3 employed a video negotiation on the theory that real rather than hypothetical people and interactions would stimulate greater participant engagement and impression formation. Given the richer design, we were also able to simultaneously measure backlash and the attribution mediators without fear of data contamination, enabling direct tests of mediation.

#### Method

##### Participants

Data for this study were collected from 532 undergraduate students invited to participate in management experiments in return for an extra credit point in a business foundations course. The median age of participants was 21 years. The sample consisted of 200 (37.6%) men and 332 (62.4%) women. We restricted our analyses to participants who watched the video in its entirety, reducing the final usable dataset to 523 (62.7% women).

##### Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to watch one of eight videos of a salary negotiation. Participants were told that the video was a tape of an actual negotiation that took place the previous

<sup>3</sup> Details available upon request.

semester at a different university. The videos actually depicted actors who had been hired to perform a scripted salary negotiation that varied based on manipulated experimental conditions (see below for script construction and Appendix C for a copy of the script). Conditions varied based on the gender of the target negotiator (male or female), advocacy (self or other) and negotiation style (assertive or non-assertive). In all the videos, the hiring manager was male, and his behavior was static across conditions. After participants watched the video, they were asked to rate their impressions of the negotiator they had just observed.

#### Variables

**Gender of target negotiator.** Care was taken to hire actors of equal ability and attractiveness to play the role of target negotiator. The university's theater department was contacted to solicit acting majors to submit head shots. The head shots received were sent to a focus group of six people (three male and three female), who were asked to match male and female actors of the same attractiveness. These pairs of actors auditioned together, and the pair who performed most similarly were hired. The male actor played the role of Matt; the female actor played the role of Mary. On the day of the shooting, both actors were instructed to dress in business casual attire, as if they were going to a job interview at the student-run corporation. All filming took place on a single day so that wardrobe and appearance was static across all conditions.

**Advocacy.** In the self-advocacy condition, the target was negotiating on his or her own behalf for his or her salary. In the other-advocacy condition, the target was a member of the company that had referred the new recruit for the position and was negotiating on behalf of the new recruit for the recruit's salary. At one of the researcher's universities, students run a university-based corporation ("Corp") that recruits many hires based on a referral process similar to that outlined in the original materials for Study 1. Namely, current employees can go before a board-selected hiring manager to advocate for a friend. Thus, this proved a realistic setting in which to situate an incoming salary negotiation between a student hiring manager and another student who was either negotiating on his or her own behalf (to be hired) or on behalf of a friend (to be hired). A script was written by two Corp students, pre-screened for realism by two other Corps students, and modified as necessary. The final script is shown in Appendix C.

**Negotiation style.** Style was manipulated to be either assertive or non-assertive by building upon the dialogue used in Studies 1 and 2.

**Backlash.** We modified the backlash measure from Study 1 to better disentangle social from work-based backlash. To measure *social backlash*, we used the same items measuring desire to interact socially with the focal individual ( $\alpha = .93$ ;  $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ). To measure work-based backlash, instead of focusing on the desire to interact at work with a peer (as in Study 1), participants rated their desire for a hierarchical working relationship with the target, specifically, "To what extent do you believe Mary [Matt] would make a good leader?" and "Would you like to be on a project team led by Mary [Matt]?" We refer to this measure as *leadership backlash*. As in Study 1, we reverse coded the items so that a higher score would represent a greater willingness to backlash against the target ( $\alpha = .92$ ;  $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ).

**Gender characterizations.** Similar to Study 2, we measured gender characterizations by having participants rate on a scale from 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("Extremely") the extent to which a series of adjectives describe the target. It was not possible to measure impressions after every speaking turn, as pausing the video every

**Table 1a**

Regression analyses testing effect of advocacy/style interaction on backlash against female negotiators.

Variable	Social backlash			Leader backlash		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Advocacy	0.17	0.27	0.05	0.75	0.26	0.25**
Negotiation Style	1.06	0.26	0.34***	0.35	0.26	0.12
Advocacy * Style	-0.77	0.37	-0.21*	-0.80	0.37	-0.23*

Note: Social Backlash  $R^2 = .07$ . Leader Backlash  $R^2 = .03$ . Advocacy is coded as 0 for self and 1 for other. Negotiation Style is coded as 0 for non-assertive and 1 for assertive.

\*  $p < .05$ .  
 \*\*  $p < .01$ .  
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

10–15 s would have been extraordinarily disruptive. Thus, we simply captured final impressions [Positive Masculine scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ;  $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ), Negative Masculine scale ( $\alpha = .83$ ;  $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ), Positive Feminine scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ;  $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ), Negative Feminine scale ( $\alpha = .74$ ;  $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ )].

#### Results

We began by returning to test Hypothesis 1: whether assertive female negotiators in an other-advocacy context suffer less social backlash than assertive female negotiators in a self-advocacy context. To test the effect of our manipulated conditions on likelihood to backlash, we conducted a series of split-sample linear regression analyses with backlash as the dependent variable and advocacy, negotiation style, and the interaction of advocacy and negotiation style as the independent variables.<sup>4</sup> Results of these regressions are presented in Tables 1a and 1b. Confirming Hypothesis 1a, for female negotiators, there was a significant interaction effect of advocacy and negotiation style predicting social backlash ( $\beta = -.215$ ;  $t_{(260)} = -2.06$ ;  $p = .041$ ). Mean comparisons reveal that assertive, self-advocating female negotiators incurred greater social backlash ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) relative to all other groups [non-assertive self-advocates ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ,  $t_{(130)} = 3.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ), non-assertive other-advocates ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ,  $t_{(129)} = 3.30$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and assertive other-advocates ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ,  $t_{(131)} = 2.27$ ,  $p = .025$ )]. This same interaction was non-significant for men ( $\beta = -.156$ ;  $t_{(255)} = -1.45$ ;  $p = .15$ ).

While this finding confirms Hypothesis 1a, it differs from the results obtained in Study 1, where female non-assertive other-advocates also incurred backlash. This inconsistency is resolved when analyzing leader backlash as the dependent variable. Recall that in Study 1, work and social backlash merged into a single measure of peer-directed desire for interaction, leading us to re-operationalize work-based backlash to be about a hierarchical working relationship (subordinate/leader). This more refined measure of leader backlash captures the unique backlash against non-assertive, other-advocating women. There was a significant interaction effect of advocacy and negotiation style predicting leader backlash against female negotiators ( $\beta = -.232$ ;  $t_{(260)} = -2.18$ ;  $p = .030$ ). A planned contrast effect confirmed that non-assertive, other-advocating negotiators incurred greater leader backlash relative to all other female negotiators ( $t_{(260)} = 2.52$ ,  $p = .013$ ). This same interaction was non-significant for male negotiators ( $\beta = -.169$ ;  $t_{(255)} = -1.57$ ;  $p = .12$ ). Fig. 2 plots the mean backlash scores for women across conditions.

We next analyzed the effect of manipulated condition on gender attributions using a series of linear regression analyses. We began

<sup>4</sup> We use linear regression here in order to provide a more appropriate set up for the mediation tests that follow.



**Table 1b**  
Regression analyses testing effect of advocacy/style interaction on backlash against male negotiators.

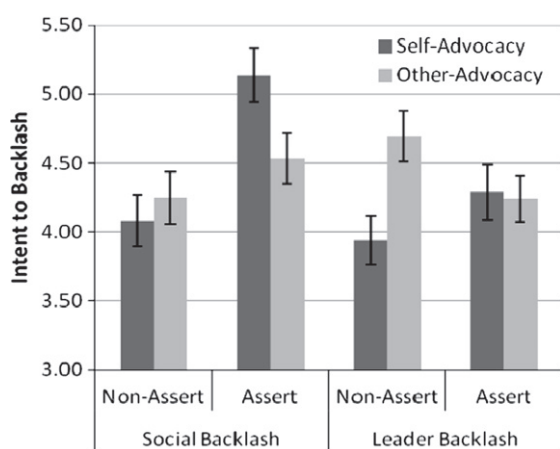
Variable	Social backlash			Leader backlash		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Advocacy	-0.03	0.26	-0.01	0.08	0.02	0.27
Negotiation Style	0.27	0.26	0.09	0.36	0.11	1.26
Advocacy * Style	-0.53	0.37	-0.16	-0.64	-0.17	-1.57

Note: Social Backlash  $R^2 = .02$ . Leader Backlash  $R^2 = .02$ . Advocacy is coded as 0 for self and 1 for other. Negotiation Style is coded as 0 for non-assertive and 1 for assertive.

All coefficients are non-significant.

by testing Hypothesis 2, that assertive female negotiators are attributed more positive and negative masculine characteristics relative to non-assertive female negotiators (H2a) but that those negotiating for themselves incur greater negative masculine attributions than those negotiating for others (H2b). Confirming the former, both men and women in the assertive condition were rated more highly on the positive masculine [full sample ( $F_{(1,521)} = 49.52, p < .001; R^2 = .09; \beta = .295, t_{(521)} = 7.04, p < .001$ ), male split sample ( $F_{(1,257)} = 30.79, p < .001; R^2 = .11; \beta = .327, t_{(257)} = 5.55, p < .001$ ), female split sample ( $F_{(1,262)} = 19.20, p < .001; R^2 = .07; \beta = .261, t_{(262)} = 4.38, p < .001$ )], and on the negative masculine dimensions relative to those in the non-assertive condition [full sample ( $F_{(1,521)} = 176.02, p < .001; R^2 = .25; \beta = .503, t_{(521)} = 13.27, p < .001$ ), male split sample ( $F_{(1,257)} = 104.07, p < .001; R^2 = .29; \beta = .537, t_{(257)} = 10.20, p < .001$ ), and female split sample ( $F_{(1,262)} = 76.46, p < .001; R^2 = .23; \beta = .475, t_{(262)} = 8.74, p < .001$ )].

Also consistent with our prediction (H2b), for assertive negotiators, self-advocating women incurred more negative masculine attributions relative to other-advocating women. Further, this was unique to women (though the means trended in the same direction for men, this relationship was non-significant). This effect is demonstrated with split-sample regression equations predicting the effect of advocacy on negative masculine attributions for assertive negotiators [male split sample ( $F_{(1,127)} = 2.83, p = .10; R^2 = .02; \beta = -.148, t_{(127)} = -1.68, p = .10$ ), female split sample ( $F_{(1,131)} = 15.17, p < .001; R^2 = .10; \beta = -.322, t_{(131)} = -3.90, p < .001$ )].



**Fig. 2.** Study 3: Social and leader backlash against female negotiators by advocacy and negotiation style condition. Note: Bars represent mean ratings for each condition. Vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

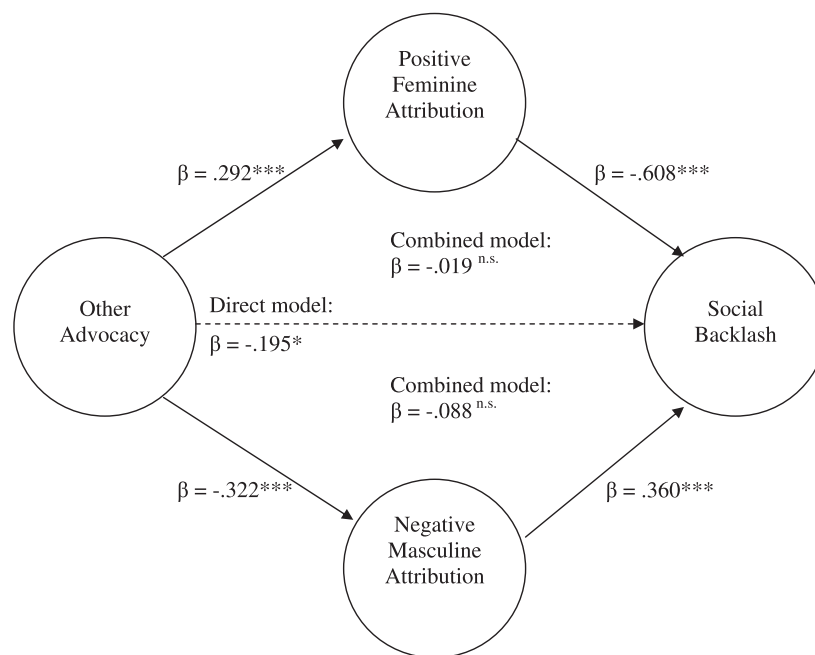
We next tested Hypothesis 3, that non-assertive female negotiators are attributed more positive and negative feminine characteristics relative to assertive female negotiators (H3a) but that those negotiating for others incur greater negative feminine attributions than those negotiating for themselves (H3b). Confirming H3a, both men and women in the non-assertive condition were rated more highly on the positive feminine dimensions than those in the assertive condition [full sample ( $F_{(1,521)} = 84.31, p < .001; R^2 = .14; \beta = -.373, t_{(521)} = -9.18, p < .001$ ), male split sample ( $F_{(1,257)} = 24.22, p < .001; R^2 = .09; \beta = -.293, t_{(257)} = -4.92, p < .001$ ), and female split sample ( $F_{(1,262)} = 67.53, p < .001; R^2 = .21; \beta = -.453, t_{(262)} = -8.22, p < .001$ )], though only non-assertive women were rated more highly than assertive women on the negative feminine dimensions [full sample ( $F_{(1,521)} = 11.09, p = .001; R^2 = .02; \beta = -.144, t_{(521)} = -3.33, p = .001$ ), male split sample ( $F_{(1,257)} = 1.67, p = .198; R^2 = .01; \beta = -.080, t_{(257)} = -1.29, p = .198$ ), and female split sample ( $F_{(1,262)} = 11.85, p = .001; R^2 = .04; \beta = -.208, t_{(262)} = -3.44, p = .001$ )].

Consistent with H2b, for non-assertive negotiators, there was a marginally significant effect of other-advocating female negotiators incurring more negative feminine attributions relative to self-advocating female negotiators. The same was true for male negotiators. This effect is demonstrated with split-sample regression equations predicting the effect of advocacy on negative feminine attributions for assertive negotiators [male split sample ( $F_{(1,128)} = 3.64, p = .06; R^2 = .03; \beta = .166, t_{(128)} = 1.91, p = .06$ ), female split sample ( $F_{(1,129)} = 3.18, p = .08; R^2 = .02; \beta = .155, t_{(129)} = 1.78, p = .08$ )]. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, this effect is unique to the non-assertive condition, as there is no significant effect of advocacy on negative feminine attributions in the assertive condition.

Finally, we concluded our analyses with a series of mediation tests. Because there were no significant differences in backlash against men, the following analyses are limited to female targets. Given our hypotheses, gender attributions need to be compared within rather than across assertive condition. So, instead of mediated moderation, we tested for mediation using a modified version of Baron and Kenny (1986) using split-sample comparisons.

We began by demonstrating the mediation of social backlash by positive feminine (e.g., warmth, kindness) and negative masculine (e.g., arrogance, dominance) attributions, as these dimensions should most directly predict desire to interact socially with a target individual. As shown prior, assertive, self-advocating women incurred the greatest social backlash. Further, for female negotiators, positive feminine attributions are negatively related to social backlash ( $F_{(1,262)} = 159.91, p < .001; R^2 = .38; \beta = -.563, t_{(262)} = -10.91, p < .001$ ), while negative masculine attributions are positively related to social backlash ( $F_{(1,262)} = 32.61, p < .001; R^2 = .02; \beta = .333, t_{(262)} = 5.71, p < .001$ ). In addition, each independently mediated the effect of advocacy on social backlash for assertive female negotiators, as evidenced by the drop in significance of the direct effect of advocacy when either positive feminine or negative masculine attributions are included in the equation (see Fig. 3).

We next test for the mediation of leader backlash by positive masculine (e.g., ambitious, independent) and negative feminine (e.g., weak, insecure) attributions, as these dimensions should most directly predict competence in leadership. As shown previously, non-assertive, other-advocating women incurred the greatest leader backlash. In addition, for female negotiators, positive masculine attributions are negatively related to leader backlash ( $F_{(1,262)} = 71.40, p < .001; R^2 = .21; \beta = -.463, t_{(262)} = -8.45, p < .001$ ), while negative masculine attributions are positively related to leader backlash ( $F_{(1,262)} = 32.13, p < .001; R^2 = .11; \beta = .331, t_{(262)} = 5.67, p < .001$ ). Further, each independently mediated the effect of advocacy on leader backlash for non-assertive female negotiators, as evidenced



**Fig. 3.** Study 3: Gender attributions mediating the effect of other-advocacy on social backlash for assertive female negotiators. Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

by the drop in significance of the direct effect of advocacy when either positive masculine or negative feminine attributions are included in the equation (See Fig. 4).

#### Discussion

Study 3 bolsters the findings from Studies 1 and 2 by fully supporting Hypotheses 1–3 in addition to testing and confirming mediation (Hypothesis 4). Together, we have observed results that confirm our predictions for the underlying negative attributions made about female negotiators. We found that when female negotiators violate role expectations, they are characterized by negative traits and a lack of positive traits consistent with the ways in which they violated their roles. Assertive, self-advocating female negotiators were attributed negative masculine characteristics, suggesting they were seen as overstepping into male roles. By contrast, non-assertive, other-advocating female negotiators were attributed negative feminine characteristics, suggesting they were viewed as not living up to female roles. Furthermore, these gender attributions mediated social and leader backlash against targeted individuals.

#### General discussion

Study 1 extends prior empirical research by showing when counterparts are likely to engage in backlash against female negotiators based on assertiveness and advocacy. When negotiating for themselves, assertive women are subjected to a backlash similar to that observed in other contexts (e.g., Fiske et al., 1991; Heilman, 2001; Rudman, 1998). However, when negotiating for another, women's success in using assertive tactics (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2005) is not a tradeoff between their social outcomes and their principal's economic outcomes. Rather, we show that other-advocating women who are assertive are not subject to backlash. We argue that their assertive behavior is seen as conforming to gendered expectations to help others and subsequently is not a role violation to be punished. However, this alignment of assertiveness with gendered expectations did not free other-advocating women to negotiate assertively with impunity;

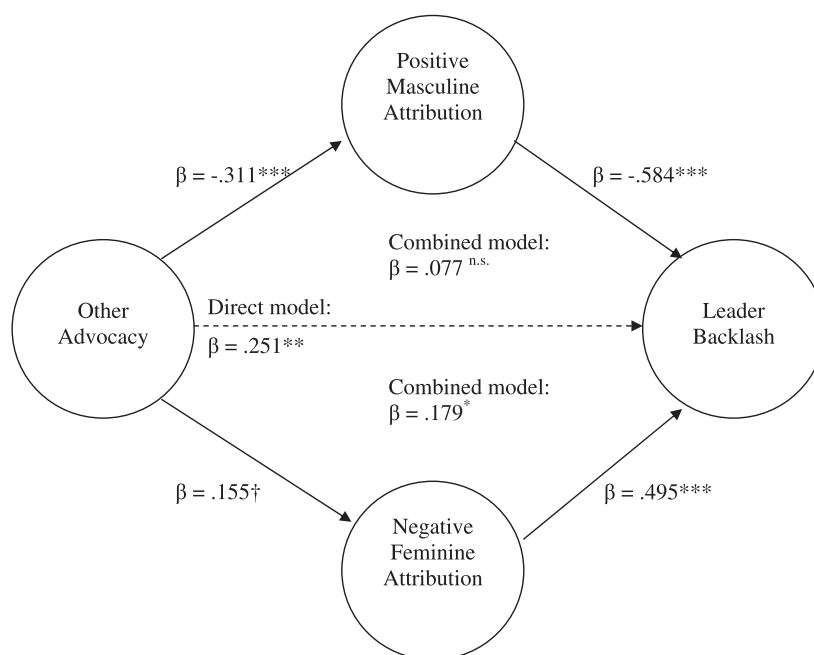
rather, it constrained them to behave this way. In other words, other-advocating women were punished for not negotiating assertively; thus, they were not released from gendered expectations but merely subjected to a new set of gendered constraints.

Studies 2 and 3 explored the underlying mechanisms of backlash against assertive self-advocating and non-assertive other-advocating female negotiators. Contrary to past research that has focused broadly on masculinity and femininity, we break these constructs into their positive and negative components. We explore how positive gender prescriptions (how people should behave) and negative proscriptions (how people ought not behave) implicate impression formation of norm violation. Study 2 confirmed our predictions that gender norm violations result in strong negative attributions. Specifically, assertive, self-advocating females draw negative masculine characterizations (e.g. arrogant, entitled, and dominating), and non-assertive, other-advocating females draw negative feminine characterizations (e.g., weak, naïve, and gullible).

Study 3's video results further supported this pattern of negative impression formation for the different types of role violations and demonstrated mediation of the backlash effect. Assertive, self-advocating women were characterized by negative masculine attributes and suffered social backlash; people did not want to interact with them at a peer level. Non-assertive other-advocating women were characterized by negative feminine attributes and suffered leader backlash; people did not want to work for them. Study 3 also showed that the absence of positive masculine and feminine characterizations could also help explain backlash.

#### Contributions

Our work provides a new theoretical outlook on when and how gender role expectations influence impression formation. Advocacy moderates gendered expectations for women. This suggests that while the content of gender role expectations may be relatively fixed, the application of those expectations depends on the situational context. Perceivers may interpret the same behavior exhibited by a target individual as confirming or violating gender role expectations based on the situation.



**Fig. 4.** Study 3: Gender attributions mediating the effect of other-advocacy on leader backlash for non-assertive female negotiators. Note:  $^{\dagger}p < .10$ ,  $^*p < .05$ ,  $^{**}p < .01$ ,  $^{***}p < .001$ .

Our studies contribute specifically to negotiation research by showing that advocacy is an important moderator of counterpart reactions, which deviates from the previous research that focused exclusively on how advocacy affects negotiator behavior and outcomes (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2005). We also show that both assertive, self-advocating women and non-assertive, other-advocating women suffer backlash, albeit of a different nature. Also, given that counterpart reactions influence negotiator reputations, our findings suggest backlash effects may have long-term consequences. Those attributed negative masculine characteristics may be presumed as more distributive in orientation, a reputation that carries negative consequences even when it is false (Tinsley, O'Connor, & Sullivan, 2002). Negotiators attributed negative feminine characteristics may be seen as “shark bait,” such that future counterparts are motivated to try to take advantage of them with hardball tactics. In mixed-motive contexts such as negotiation, having the power to defend oneself is necessary to encourage one's counterpart to behave cooperatively (Axelrod, 1984).

More broadly, our research also offers insight into gender roles and the behaviors that trigger backlash. Our finding that other advocates are not free from backlash but rather subject to new behavioral constraints suggests that backlash is not about women's behavior, per se, but rather about the fit of that behavior with the situational context, which cues role expectations. This result ties back to the “likeable vs. competent” dilemma that women face. Situation has a role in determining the type of negative characterization for which women are at greater risk. In self-advocacy contexts, women risk being seen as negatively masculine: assertive behavior is seen as dominant and aggressive and as a sign they are overstepping their role, which leads to social backlash (i.e., competent but unlikable). In other-advocacy contexts, women risk being seen as negatively feminine: non-assertive behavior is seen as weak and gullible, suggesting they are underperforming their role, which leads to leadership backlash (i.e., likable but not competent).

The weakness of these relationships for men suggests gender roles are more constraining for women than men. Recall that in Study 1, men's behavior had no effect on evaluations. Similarly, in Study 3, although male negotiators were sometimes subject to the same negative attributions (based on negotiation style and

advocacy), these impressions did not translate into backlash. This suggests that observers are not oblivious to men's behavior but simply are more tolerant of it. Asymmetry of consequences for behavior across genders has been found in leadership research; other domains should be explored. Further, it is possible that our measures simply did not capture the specific type of backlash that male targets are more likely to incur. Additional research is needed to identify whether men are subjected to unique forms of backlash that have not been studied.

#### Implications

Our findings have practical implications for the gender wage gap. Despite efforts to minimize it, the wage gap persists between similarly experienced men and women. Though many factors contribute to this state of affairs, disparity in salary negotiations is one that directly affects earning potential. Our research suggests women may accept lower salaries than men not because they are less motivated, but because they feel constrained by behavioral expectations dictated by the gender roles prevalent in society.

Fortunately, the results of our research that elucidate the cause of the problem also imply practical remedies for managing gendered constraints. An understanding of the gendered constraints on behavioral expression in negotiation allows for discussion of how to alter the situation to relieve the effect of these constraints. For example, the moderating effect of advocacy demonstrates that, in some cases, female gender role expectations align with assertive negotiation tactics. Thus, it may be possible in self-oriented negotiations for women to make a concerted effort at reframing the negotiation into an other-oriented exchange. For example, a woman might link a request for more resources to a benefit for others: more resources for her to do her job better, more money to appropriate refunds due to her organization, or more money for her entire work group.

Potential remedies also exist at the organizational level, such as compensation systems that are independent of employee self-promotion. Specific compensation systems might rely on objective performance criteria to determine raises and promotion or use peer evaluations to judge a target's worthiness rather than relying on

that individual's ability to assertively self-promote. By eliminating the need for women to assert themselves to gain value, the organization may be able to mitigate potential gendered pay disparities.

#### *Limitations and directions for future research*

We acknowledge that the exclusive use of laboratory experiments is a limitation of this work. Though experimental designs increase internal validity, allowing the necessary control to test our hypotheses, future research would benefit from studying naturalistic occurrences of self- and other-advocacy. Moreover, negotiations that do not involve the distribution of monetary resources may be subject to a distinct set of gendered expectations. It is up to future research to determine whether, for example, our results generalize to negotiations over a values conflict.

The manipulation of assertiveness employed in our studies involved assertive behavior, not assertive numbers. This suggests that backlash is triggered not by women achieving higher outcomes but by the manner in which they ask for more money. Future research should test the inverse manipulation, with behavior remaining constant and numerical counteroffers varying in assertiveness. If female negotiators are punished for behavioral but not numerical assertiveness as a role violation, this would suggest a beneficial practical remedy. Coaching women on how to ask for assertive values in an unassertive way would help them to negotiate monetarily better outcomes while avoiding backlash.

Another fruitful direction for future research would be to study a form of advocacy that combines both self- and other-interests, termed *us-advocacy* (Miller, 1991). A practical example of *us-advocacy* would be a team member negotiating a larger project management budget. In this context, the negotiator is simultaneously negotiating for both him/herself and for others. This context may create a situation in which a female negotiator can do no right, in that she is punished either for asserting herself or not asserting her group's interests, or it may create a situation in which a female negotiator can do no wrong, because her assertive behavior is justified as other-directedness toward her group and her non-assertive behavior is justified as traditional feminine warmth.

We have focused on negotiation counterparts as the "backlasher," but future research should also explore backlash from other sources, such as the negotiator's principal or other constituents. It is likely that principals would be similarly motivated to punish non-assertive agents for ineffectively pursuing their interests at the bargaining table. However, this backlash may be more severe than that from counterparts, given principals' personal stake in the poor outcomes negotiated by the non-assertive agent, whether male or female. Thus, gender differences in backlash against other-advocates may be mitigated when the principal is the source.

Finally, we point to the inherent link between gender with status. Some research holds that gendered expectations may arise from the lower status of women in society (Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Moskowitz, Suh, & Desaulniers, 1994; Ridgeway & Bourg, 2004). Since high-status actors typically enjoy looser behavioral constraints (e.g., Hollander, 1958), the high status of men relative to women has been used to explain the asymmetry in evaluating male and female leaders (Carli & Eagly, 1999; Rudman et al., 2010). Although status was not the focus of our research, we believe this link offers potential for future research. For example, assertive self-advocating women may be seen as claiming resources that their inherent low status does not entitle them. Thus, they violate not only gender roles but also status norms, potentially leading to negative masculine attributions and punishment for over-stepping their social place. Other-advocating negotiators have higher status via the conferred authority to negotiate on behalf of another. So, non-assertive other-advocates who ineffectively claim entitled

resources violate gender roles and status norms, leading to negative feminine attributions and punishment for under-performing.

#### **Conclusion**

Assertive, self-advocating female negotiators suffer backlash consistent with negative masculine characterizations. They are seen as dominant and arrogant, and people do not want to interact on a peer level with them. Non-assertive, other-advocating female negotiators suffer a different backlash consistent with negative feminine characterizations. They are seen as weak and gullible, and people do not want to be led by them. Awareness of these attribution and backlash risks may help women navigate each situation's unique threat.

#### **Appendix A. Study 1: manipulation of assertive/non-assertive negotiator behavior [by advocacy]**

##### *A.1. Assertive condition*

Round 1: Your offer is insulting; it is way too low for me [my friend]. You would be foolish not to seriously consider this counteroffer.

Round 2: I have [My friend has] other offers that are looking much more desirable right now. If you do not consider this counteroffer, I [my friend] may be forced to accept a position at another company.

Round 3: Your offer is unreasonable; I refuse [my friend refuses] to work for so little. There is no way you can possibly expect me [my friend] to work for less than this.

Round 4: I am [My friend is] shocked that you would offer me [him/her] so little. I need [He/She needs] to be paid more. I strongly suggest you accept this offer because I refuse [my friend refuses] to work for less.

##### *A.2. Non-assertive condition*

Round 1: Thank you for that offer, but I [my friend] was hoping to earn more. I believe this salary is fair to both you and me [my friend].

Round 2: I appreciate your offer but unfortunately I [my friend] just cannot accept. I believe this number serves as a reasonable compromise.

Round 3: I feel we are making some progress, but unfortunately [my friend] still cannot accept. I [My friend] was hoping you might find this salary reasonable.

Round 4: While I [my friend] cannot accept that offer, I feel we are nearing a satisfactory middle ground. I think both you and I [my friend] will be happy with this salary.

#### **Appendix B. Study 1: social backlash scale items**

##### *B.1. Work-based backlash*

How interested would you be in working with Mary [Mark] at Alpha?

If you were the project manager on a work assignment, how likely would you be to ask Mary [Mark] to be part of the project team?

Is Mary [Mark] the type of person you like to work with?

##### *B.2. Personal backlash*

How interested would you be in interacting socially with Mary [Mark]?

If Mary [Mark] invited you out for drinks after work, how likely would you be to go with her [him]?

Is Mary [Mark] the type of person you like to socialize with?

### Appendix C. Study 3: corp negotiation script

Self (Other)

Assertive [Non-assertive]

Brian: Good morning. I am Brian, the hiring manager for the Corp. Congratulations on your offer with us. We are really looking forward to you joining our team and think you will find the experience very rewarding. (Thanks very much for referring Josh to work with us. We were excited to make him an offer and are really looking forward to him joining our team. I think he'll find the experience very rewarding.) As you know, the Corp. is a non-profit, student-run organization with the goal of providing low-cost goods and services to students. We operate 7 businesses, including the Vital Vittles convenience store, 3 coffee shops – Uncommon Grounds, More Uncommon Grounds, and Midnight Mug, Corp. Catering, Student Storage, and Hoya Snaxa, and we are excited about what you (Josh) can bring to the company as a new manager in Vital Vittles.

Mary: Thanks. I'm really excited about the opportunity and eager to begin. (I'm really glad it worked out, and I know Josh is excited about the opportunity and eager to begin.)

Brian: Great, then let's get right to it. Thanks for coming in today to discuss and hopefully finalize the details of your (Josh's) offer so that we can get you (him) started working here. Mary: Absolutely. I am confident that we can come to an agreement today that I (he) will be happy to accept.

Brian: Salary is the one issue left and we are prepared to offer you (Josh) \$1100 per semester.

Mary: Oh, I don't think so. That offer is insulting; it is way too low for me. (Josh) [Thank you for that offer, but I (Josh) was hoping to earn more.] I propose \$1800 per semester. You would be foolish not to seriously consider this counteroffer. [I believe this salary is fair to both of us. (you)]

Brian: No, that's no good. How about \$1300? That seems fair.

Mary: I don't think that's fair at all. Frankly, I'm shocked that you would offer me (Josh) so little. I have (He has) other offers that are looking much more desirable right now. [No. I appreciate your offer but unfortunately I (Josh) just cannot accept it.] How about \$1700 per semester? If you do not consider this salary, I (Josh) may be forced to accept another campus offer. [This seems like a reasonable compromise.]

Brian: Well, that's not acceptable for us. We could do \$1350.

Mary: I (Josh) can't agree to that. Your offer is unreasonable; I'd (Josh would) refuse to work for so little. There is no way you can possibly expect me (him) to work for less than \$1600. [I think we are making some progress, but unfortunately I (he) still can't accept it. I was hoping you might find a salary of \$1600 reasonable.]

Brian: That's still too high for us. What about \$1400?

Mary: No. I am (Josh is) definitely worth more than this and need to be paid more. [While I (Josh) cannot accept that offer, I think we are nearing a satisfactory middle ground.] How about \$1550? You should accept this offer because I (he) would refuse to work for less. [I think we'll (you'll) both be happy with that salary.]

Fade out and show on screen that after more back and forth in the negotiation Brian and Mary reach a mutually acceptable agreement on her (Josh's) salary of \$1500.

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