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# How Can Women Escape the Compensation Negotiation Dilemma? Relational Accounts Are One Answer

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## Abstract

Policy makers, academics, and media reports suggest that women could shrink the gender pay gap by negotiating more effectively for higher compensation. Yet women entering compensation negotiations face a dilemma: They have to weigh the benefits of negotiating against the social consequences of having negotiated. Research shows that women are penalized socially more than men for negotiating for higher pay. To address this dilemma, the authors test strategies to help women improve both their negotiation and social outcomes in compensation negotiations. In Study 1, communicating concern for organizational relationships improved female negotiators' social outcomes, and offering a legitimate account for compensation requests improved negotiation outcomes. However, neither strategy—alone or in combination—improved both women's social and negotiation outcomes. Study 2 tested two strategies devised to improve female negotiators' social and negotiation outcomes by explaining why a compensation request is legitimate in relational terms. Results showed that, although adherence to the feminine stereotype is insufficient, using these “relational accounts” can improve women's social and negotiation outcomes at the same time. Normative implications of conformity to gender stereotypes to reduce gender pay disparities are discussed.

## Keywords

salaries, equity (payment), negotiation, interpersonal communication, stereotyped attitudes, impression management, human sex differences

Research on salary negotiations suggests that gender differences in starting salaries are a significant contributor to long-term earning differentials between men and women (Barron, 2003; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Gerhart, 1990; Gerhart & Rynes, 1991; Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman, 2007). Gendered compensation expectations are one explanation for this gender pay gap. Research indicates that, because men typically earn more than women, men tend to have higher compensation expectations (Hogue, DuBois, & Fox-Cardamone, 2010; Jost, 1997; Major, McFarlin, & Gagnon, 1984; Stevens, Bavetta, & Gist, 1993) and employers anticipate that they will need to pay men more (Belliveau, 2005; Solnick, 2001; Williams, Paluk, & Spencer-Rodgers, 2010). In the context of a compensation negotiation, these expectations become a self-fulfilling prophecy—particularly when there is ambiguity about pay standards (Bowles et al., 2005).

However, gendered pay expectations do not tell the entire story. There is also evidence that women are more reluctant than men to negotiate at all for higher compensation (Small et al., 2007). Therefore, even if men and women benefitted equally from negotiating for higher pay, women could still come out behind simply because they failed to ask for more

money. This raises the question, could women begin to close the gender pay gap simply by learning to negotiate more like men for higher compensation (Kaman & Hartel, 1994; Stevens et al., 1993)?

The answer to this question is not simple. Research strongly suggests that women could increase their immediate compensation by negotiating more often and with higher earnings expectations (Gerhart & Rynes, 1991; Malhotra & Bazerman, 2007; Pinkley & Northcraft, 2000; Stevens et al., 1993). However, research also shows that women have good reason to be more reticent than men about negotiating for higher compensation because women pay a higher social cost than men for doing so. In multiple studies, Bowles, Babcock, and Lai (2007) showed that evaluators were disinclined to work with female managers who negotiated for

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higher pay because they perceived these women to be less nice and more demanding than women who let the opportunity to negotiate pass. This disinclination to work with employees who negotiate for higher pay was consistently greater for women than men and generally negligible for men.

Negotiating for higher compensation is socially costly for women because it violates prescriptive gender stereotypes derived from the gendered division of labor (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Steffen, 1984), and its resulting social hierarchy of men in charge and women in caregiving and support roles (Hoffman & Hurst, 1990; Jackman, 1994; Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1977; Ridgeway & Bourg, 2004). Negotiating for higher compensation is consistent with the masculine stereotype of the agentic, breadwinning man, but contradicts normative expectations of women as other-oriented and caring, as giving rather than taking in character (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly, 1987; Jackman, 1994; Latu et al., 2011; Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Wade, 2001).

Anticipating social backlash, women are more reticent than men to self-advocate for higher compensation (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2007). Even if a woman successfully negotiates a higher wage, she could dampen her long-term earnings if she alienates colleagues who might be important to her career advancement (see Dreher & Ash, 1990; Higgins & Kram, 2001). If colleagues are disinclined to work with her, she might miss out on desirable work assignments and critical support from mentors and sponsors. These social costs of negotiating could easily outweigh the benefits of securing a higher compensation offer.

The aim of the current research was to test strategies for how women negotiating for higher pay might enhance their social outcomes while also improving their negotiation outcomes (viz., the other party's willingness to grant their negotiation requests). Building on psychological and sociological research on gender in social influence, social backlash, and account making, as well as practitioners' insights on negotiation and the advancement of women in the workplace, we devised and tested multiple potential scripts for women negotiating for higher compensation.

Our research advances theory in four respects. First, it extends research on gender-based social backlash in the workplace by testing the effectiveness of strategies for self-advocacy on negotiation outcomes as well as on social outcomes. Second, it contributes to the literature on gender in negotiation by testing the boundaries of the compensation negotiation dilemma for women. Third, it contributes to the study of social accounts in negotiation by illustrating the importance of crafting accounts that conform to identity-based social expectations. Finally, our research reinforces the importance of measuring the social implications of one's negotiating behavior, which may ultimately be of greater

consequence than one's immediate economic returns (Curhan, Elfenbein, & Kilduff, 2009).

### *Demonstrating Concern for Organizational Relationships*

As just described, self-advocating for higher compensation is problematic for female negotiators because it is a stereotypically masculine behavior that violates prescriptions of the feminine stereotype (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2007; Wade, 2001). One strategy for women to reduce the social costs of counter-stereotypical behavior is to display communal attributes, such as concern for others. There are two distinct but complementary explanations for why demonstrating concern for others makes women's counter-stereotypical behavior more socially acceptable.

First, women have more leeway to behave in stereotypically masculine ways if they are also fulfilling the expectations of feminine behavior, such as showing concern for others (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Rudman & Glick, 2008). Carli, LaFleur, and Loeber (1995) found that competent women were significantly more likable and thus more influential when they used a social style of influence (e.g., leaning in with a friendly expression) as opposed to a strictly task-oriented style of influence. In contrast, the social style of influence had no effect on men's persuasiveness. Heilman and Okimoto (2007) showed that negativity toward a woman who succeeds at male tasks is reduced when evaluators learn that the woman has other communal attributes, such as being cooperative and concerned about others.

This stereotype-fulfillment explanation is implicitly status based because psychological theory strongly suggests that gender-stereotypic prescriptions of communality for women derive from men's and women's respective roles within society (Eagly & Steffen, 1984) and the associated gender-status hierarchy (Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996; Glick & Fiske, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2008). A second, sociological argument for why communicating concern for others allows women to behave in more stereotypically masculine ways is more explicitly status based. Motivated by expectation states theory (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977), this argument treats gender as an ascribed form of status, similar to race. According to expectation states theory, people hold higher expectations of the competencies and contributions of higher status actors. For instance, in mixed-gender work groups, men would be expected to make more valuable contributions than women. To enhance their influence, women must find ways to compensate for this expectations gap (Ridgeway & Bourg, 2004).

Sociological research suggests that women can do so by signaling that they are motivated to act in the best interest of their targets of influence. By appearing other-concerned, women can make their contributions seem more valuable to their targets than if they appear self-interested (Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1977; Ridgeway, 1978, 1982). Ridgeway

(1982, p. 81) showed that women in male work groups were significantly more influential when they framed their comments in group-oriented terms (e.g., “I think it’s important that we cooperate”). Men’s influence was not contingent on how they framed their contributions.

In the context of compensation negotiations, we hypothesize that demonstrating concern for organizational relationships will reduce the social costs to women of making claim to higher pay because it fulfills the feminine stereotype (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987) and conveys a motivation to act in the best of interest of other organizational members (Ridgeway, 1982). We also focus on concern for organizational relationships for practical reasons. It is a communal behavior that is germane to job negotiations and that can be enacted in a myriad of ways across widely diverse work contexts.

### Legitimizing Negotiation Requests

Although we predict that communicating concern for organizational relationships will improve women’s social outcomes, we have no reason to believe that it will improve their ability to get what they want in the negotiation. Indeed, negotiation research suggests that focusing on relational concerns could even harm one’s negotiation performance because it implies a willingness to make concessions for the sake of appearing nice (Amanatullah, Morris, & Curhan, 2008; Gelfand, Major, Raver, Nishii, & O’Brien, 2006; Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994). We propose that female negotiators can also enhance the persuasiveness of their negotiation requests by making these requests appear more legitimate.

One strategy for making compensation requests appear more legitimate is to use a social account. A social account is “a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior” (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 46) by making an excuse, justifying the behavior, or minimizing its implications (Sitkin & Bies, 1993). Social accounts can take varied forms and logics, but they only work if the target accepts the explanation (Bies, 1987; Blumstein et al., 1974; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Shapiro, 1991). Targets choose to cooperate, retaliate, or trust based on whether the social account appropriately and sufficiently explains the actor’s behavior (Bies, 1987; Shapiro, 1991). Applying the concept of a social account to job negotiations, we predict that evaluators will be more willing to grant employees’ pay requests if they perceive the employees’ explanation for their negotiating behavior to be legitimate (i.e., it seems appropriate and justified by the context).

### Relational Accounts

Improving both social and negotiation outcomes is essential to addressing women’s compensation negotiation dilemma—but neither alone is sufficient. Negotiating behavior that fulfills the feminine stereotype but does not legitimize the negotiation behavior only solves the social

challenge. A negotiating account that persuades an evaluator to grant a woman’s salary request but that violates prescriptions of the feminine stereotype achieves only the negotiation objective. To improve both negotiation and social outcomes, we hypothesize that women could combine these two strategies by accounting for their negotiating behavior in inherently relational terms. We refer to this approach as using a “relational account,” a strategy that makes female negotiators appear more relational and thereby more gender-stereotype congruent while simultaneously making their compensation requests seem more legitimate.

In sum, the logic for our notion of relational accounts builds from the following theoretically grounded propositions:

*Hypothesis 1:* When negotiating for higher compensation, demonstrating concern for organizational relationships will improve women’s social outcomes, specifically by increasing evaluators’ willingness to work with them.

*Hypothesis 2:* Social accounts that increase the perceived legitimacy of negotiation requests will improve negotiation outcomes, specifically by increasing the willingness of other parties to grant such requests.

The notion of a relational account highlights that common strategies to improve social and material outcomes in negotiation are not always compatible and therefore not additive. We propose that women can devise negotiating strategies to overcome the compensation negotiation dilemma by meeting these dual objectives in mutually compatible ways. In conclusion, we predict:

*Hypothesis 3:* When negotiating for higher compensation, women can increase their social and negotiation outcomes using a relational account—a legitimate explanation for their negotiation behavior that also effectively communicates their concern for organizational relationships.

### Overview of Our Two Studies

We report the results of two studies in which an employee attempts to negotiate for higher compensation after promotion to a new management position. Participants assume the role of an executive within the company and evaluate the employee’s behavior in a videotaped interview (procedure adapted from Bowles et al., 2007). We manipulated the script the employee used to negotiate for higher compensation. In Study 1, we manipulated whether the script expressed concern for organizational relationships and whether it provided an explanation for the compensation request. In Study 2, we manipulated whether the script contained a relational account for the negotiating behavior. We tested whether these manipulations had an impact on willingness to grant the request (negotiation outcome) and willingness to work with the negotiator (social outcome).

## Study 1

In Study 1, we tested Hypotheses 1 and 2, which predicted that demonstrating concern for organizational relationships would improve women's social outcomes and that accounting for one's negotiating behavior would increase negotiation outcomes. We manipulated negotiator gender, whether the negotiating script expressed concern for organizational relationships (*relational script*), and whether the negotiating script accounted for the compensation request with an outside offer (*outside-offer account*).

We used an outside-offer account—the claim that one has another job offer for more money—for two reasons. First, it is the most common advice for explaining why one is negotiating for higher compensation. Invoking an outside offer legitimizes the compensation request by demonstrating that the negotiator's work abilities are valued highly on the external labor market (Boswell, Boudreau, & Dunford, 2004). It also provides an excuse for the negotiating behavior by suggesting the employee would not otherwise ask for higher pay.

Second, we suspected that, in spite of its popularity, the outside-offer account would be a more socially costly strategy for women than men. Research indicates that using the external labor market to raise one's pay is a more fruitful strategy for men than women (Brett & Stroh, 1997). This difference may be because women, more than men, are expected to be “loyal servants” of the firm (Blackaby, Booth, & Frank, 2005), and the implicit threat of leaving the company violates normative expectations for communal behavior from women (Bowles & Babcock, 2009; Eagly, 1987).

The design of Study 1 enabled us to test not only whether appearing relational would enhance women's social outcomes and whether a legitimate account would improve the willingness to grant the request but also whether scripts that did either could be combined to do both. In other words, could expressing concern for organizational relationships soften the impression created by using an outside offer or would the implicit threat to leave the firm still undermine women's social outcomes?

## Method

### Design and Participants

Study 1 was a 2 (Negotiator Gender: Female/Male)  $\times$  2 (Relational Script: Yes/No)  $\times$  2 (Outside-Offer Account: Yes/No) between-subject experimental design. Working with a market research firm, MarketTools, we recruited 540 college-educated Americans with work experience to complete an online survey. MarketTools maintains a nationally representative panel of approximately 1-million adults living in the United States. MarketTools invited a random sample of its panelists with a college education to complete our survey. We screened for work experience to increase the external validity of our findings.

To obtain the desired number of completed surveys as quickly as possible, MarketTools invites approximately 15 times more respondents than the client requests. Once we had sufficient responses, we shut down the survey. We paid MarketTools based on the total number of completed surveys. MarketTools compensates survey respondents through eligibility to cash sweepstakes and in units of ZoomPoints earned for completed surveys. ZoomPoints are redeemable for items, such as corporate gift cards, movie and music downloads, and catalog products (e.g., 10,000 points for a digital camera). Participants earned 50 ZoomPoints for completing our survey. This recruitment procedure is similar to study announcements made to subject pools maintained by university laboratories, but MarketTools taps a more broadly representative sample of Americans.

Because pretesting indicated that some participants would experience technical problems uploading, streaming, or hearing the video and because some participants might not watch the entire video, we inserted four detailed comprehension questions at the end of the survey. These questions asked participants to identify the gender of the employee in the video, the employee's previous work experience (from one of three answers), whether the employee asked for higher compensation (yes/no), and whether the employee mentioned receiving an offer from another company (yes/no). If participants answered these four questions accurately, we could be confident that they had watched the video because the probability of passing by chance was only 4.2% (i.e.,  $1/2 \times 1/3 \times 1/2 \times 1/2$ ). We excluded 138 (26%) participants who failed the comprehension test. These exclusions appeared to be randomly distributed across conditions; there were no significant patterns in the likelihood of failing the comprehension check.

The 402 participants (197 women and 205 men) in the analyzed data set had a median age of 39.5 years (range: 20–79) and a median of 19 years of work experience (range: 1–55). Fully 249 (62%) had management experience, with a median of 10 years of experience (range: 1–50). A large majority ( $n = 362$ ; 90%) self-described as White, 20 (5%) as Black, 12 (3%) as Asian, and 8 (2%) as Hispanic.

### Procedure and Materials

The basic procedure was the same as that used by Bowles et al. (2007) to demonstrate that women pay a higher social cost than men for negotiating for higher pay. A professional writer helped us to improve the realism of the original Bowles et al. (2007) background information and script, and we added new scripts to test our hypotheses.

Participants accessed the online survey remotely. On the opening page, participants indicated their consent to participate. The title of the survey was Work Interview Study. The consent page explained that participants would “watch a videotape of a job placement interview, answer a survey about [their] evaluation of the candidate in the interview, and then complete a set of exit questions” and that participation

was expected to take less than 20 min. The website directed those who consented to participate to a page with background information on the interview scenario.

The background information instructed participants to adopt the role of a company executive evaluating an employee who had just completed an internal management training program. According to the information, the employee had graduated from “a top school,” performed well in the training program, and was entering a first management position. The participants were asked to consider the employee for placement in a management position in their department. The background information provided no details on the interviewer or the company’s business.

**Videotaped interview.** After reading background information, participants clicked on a link to watch a video of the employee being interviewed by a company representative. The use of video as compared to text enhances the social presence of the actor by incorporating nonverbal cues, including voice and physical appearance (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Walther & Parks, 2002). It also enhances external validity by more closely modeling an actual interview. External validity is especially enhanced for tests of gender-based hypotheses because speakers’ physical attributes are more influential on video than in writing (Chaiken & Eagly, 1983).

The videos were professionally produced with experienced actors. Video clips of the White middle-aged male interviewer were identical across all conditions. To avoid confounds between gender and actor, we hired two White men and two White women in their late 20s to enact the negotiation scripts. We filmed each actor performing all four scripts. To minimize variance across conditions, the producer recruited actors of average attractiveness and coached them to wear plainly conservative business attire, make-up, and hair styles. The producer also coached the actors to use consistent nonverbal behaviors across conditions (e.g., posture, eye contact, tone of voice).

Participants were randomly assigned to watch one of the 16 videos (4 negotiators  $\times$  4 scripts; participants per video ranged from 9 to 20). Across all conditions, the video opened with the interviewer saying, “Congratulations on your promotion!” The interviewer stated that the purpose of the interview was to figure out where to place the candidate in his or her first management position. The interviewer asked about the candidate’s experience in the training program and his or her prior work experience. The candidate described a good learning experience in the training program and management experience running a college newspaper. Finally, the interviewer asked whether the candidate had any questions about the salary and benefits package. This was the candidate’s opening to negotiate for higher compensation. The conversation up to this point was identical across conditions. It lasted approximately 2 min (total 383 words).

**Negotiation scripts.** In the *simple-negotiation* condition (i.e., no relational script, no outside-offer account), candidates

asked for a higher salary and a bonus. The simple-negotiation script is a single-issue, purely distributive request, which is identical to the script used in previous research that showed women pay a higher social cost than men for negotiating for greater compensation (Bowles et al., 2007):<sup>1</sup>

I do have some questions with regard to the salary and benefits package. It wasn’t clear to me whether this salary offer represents the top of the pay range. I understand that there’s a range in terms of how much managers are paid in their first placement. I think I should be paid at the top of that range. And I would also like to be eligible for an end-of-year bonus.

In the *relational-script* condition, candidates used the simple-negotiation script but also expressed concern for organizational relationships.

I hope it’s OK to ask you about this. I’d feel terrible if I offended you in doing so. My relationships with people here are very important to me. [*Simple negotiation script inserted here.*] I just thought this seemed like a situation in which I could get your advice about this. Would you be open to talking with me about this question of higher compensation?

We developed the language in this script after pretesting indicated that less emphatic expressions of concern for organizational relationships had little effect on evaluators’ judgments. To many readers, this strong emphasis on concern for others sounds obsequious and evokes associations with the tentative language of low-status actors (e.g., see Carli, 1990). Therefore, in our analyses, we control for how deferential, as well as how relational, the actor appeared.

In the *outside-offer-account* condition, candidates used the simple-negotiation script and explained that they had an outside offer.

One of the client companies I was working with during the training program just made me a job offer. It’s for a management position in their company. They’re offering to pay me a higher salary than I would make here, plus a bonus. [*Simple negotiation script repeated here.*]

Finally, the joint *relational-script-plus-account* condition combined the relational and outside-offer-account scripts.

## Measures

After watching the video, participants completed their evaluation of the employee using 7-point scales from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*strongly*). Participants rated their impression of the employee and the negotiation request and then reported their willingness to grant the request and work with the employee. A final exit survey contained the four comprehension questions and demographic items.

**Dependent measures.** We tested the effects of the negotiation scripts on two dependent measures, which were the social and negotiation outcomes. Our measure of the *social outcome* was a 3-item mean-composite indicator of the willingness to work with the negotiator, adopted from Bowles et al. (2007). Participants rated how likely they were to hire the employee into their department and how much they would enjoy and benefit from working with the employee ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

Our measure of the *negotiation outcome* was a single-item indicator of the participant's willingness to grant the negotiator's request: "I would definitely grant [the] request . . ." Multiple-item measures are generally better than single-item measures because they reduce the potential for random error variance. However, we chose to use a single-item indicator of the willingness to grant the request because our desired measure was relatively concrete rather than abstract (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007), relatively narrow and unambiguous (Sackett & Larson, 1990), and used on an adult population (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). Research suggests that, under these circumstances, it is appropriate to use a single-item measure.

**Explanatory measures.** We created three measures to help explain the effects of the negotiation scripts on the dependent measures. The first two related to how relational or deferential the negotiator appeared. The third related to how legitimate the negotiation request appeared.

The *relational* measure was based on an average of participants' ratings of their agreement with five statements about the employee: "clearly cares about relationships," "seems like a people person," "puts people first," "having good relationships with colleagues is important to this person," and "does *not* seem to care about maintaining good relationships at work" (reverse coded;  $\alpha = .89$ ). We developed the relational scale for our research purposes, specifically, to test whether perceived concern for organizational relationships would explain the willingness to work with female negotiators. There are other scales that measure women's perceived social skills and social attractiveness in the context of social backlash (e.g., Carli, LaFleur, & Loeber, 1995; Rudman & Glick, 1999). However, we were specifically interested in concern for organizational relationships because demonstrating concern for relationships is a central prescription of the feminine stereotype and one that is actionable in the context of a compensation negotiation.

The *deferential* measure was based on an average of participants' ratings of their agreement with statements that the employee "is deferential," "looks up to authority figures," "acts like a subordinate talking with their superior," "recognizes that they have low status in the organization," and "is acting like they are the boss" (reverse coded;  $\alpha = .73$ ). We developed the deferential scale for our research purposes, specifically, to distinguish the effects of appearing relational from the effects of appearing deferential. This was theoretically important because stereotypically feminine communication

styles are also often characteristic of low-status influence styles (e.g., see Bowles & Flynn, 2010; Carli, 1990; Small et al., 2007).

The *legitimate* measure was based on an average of the participant's ratings of how "legitimate," "justified," and "inappropriate" (reverse coded) he or she perceived the negotiation request to be ( $\alpha = .81$ ). We created this legitimate scale for our research purposes, because we wanted to test whether the perceived legitimacy of the negotiation requests would explain evaluators' willingness to grant them.

## Results

In Studies 1 and 2, we employed analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to test our hypotheses about the participants' willingness to work with the negotiator (our social outcome) and the willingness to grant the compensation request (our negotiation outcome). We conducted regression analyses to test the significance of our proposed mediators: relational as an explanation for the willingness to work with female negotiators and legitimate as an explanation for the willingness to grant negotiation requests.<sup>2</sup> Deferential was not a significant mediator in either study. Therefore, we used it only as a control in tests of the mediating effect of relational on willingness to work. For all mediation tests, we calculated the Sobel statistic (Sobel, 1982), and we bootstrapped the distribution of the product of the coefficients along the indirect path of mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). For all mediation analyses, the bootstrapping method and the Sobel calculation produced the same results. For the sake of efficiency, we report only the Sobel statistic following each mediation test. In preliminary analyses, we tested for effects of evaluator gender and for actor effects within employee gender; we found none,  $ps > .68$  and  $ps > .22$ , respectively. Therefore, we did not include these variables as factors in our analyses.

### Social Outcome

We observed a main effect for negotiator gender,  $F(1, 394) = 7.00, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .017$ , a two-way interaction of Negotiator Gender  $\times$  Relational Script,  $F(1, 394) = 7.57, p = .006, \eta_p^2 = .02$ , and a significant three-way interaction of Negotiator Gender  $\times$  Relational Script  $\times$  Outside-Offer Account,  $F(1, 394) = 5.37, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . No other effects were significant. Table 1 displays the full pattern of means by negotiation script and negotiator gender. Because the lower order effects are qualified by higher order interaction effects, we initiated our interpretation of the ANOVA results by decomposing the three-way interaction by negotiator gender.

We conducted separate  $2 \times 2$  ANOVAs for male and female negotiators. ANOVA of the male-negotiator conditions revealed that ratings of the willingness to work with male negotiators did not vary significantly across the negotiation conditions ( $ps > .11$ ), indicating that the manipulations

**Table 1.** Means and Standard Deviations for All Study 1 Measures Within Script Conditions.

Measures		Negotiation Scripts			
		Simple Negotiation	Relational Script	Outside-Offer Account	Relational Script Plus Account
<b>Female negotiators</b>					
	<i>n</i>	37	56	51	53
Social outcome	<i>M SD</i>	3.70 <sub>b</sub> (1.47)	†4.65 <sub>a</sub> (1.15)	4.13 <sub>b</sub> (1.54)	4.08 <sub>b</sub> (1.21)
Negotiation outcome	<i>M SD</i>	2.22 <sub>a</sub> (1.38)	2.39 <sub>a,b</sub> (1.42)	2.49 <sub>a,b</sub> (1.41)	2.87 <sub>b</sub> (1.52)
Relational	<i>M SD</i>	4.15 <sub>b</sub> (1.18)	†4.95 <sub>a</sub> (1.00)	4.25 <sub>b</sub> (1.21)	†4.54 <sub>b</sub> (1.15)
Deferential	<i>M SD</i>	3.76 <sub>a</sub> (.88)	†3.91 <sub>a</sub> (.91)	3.62 <sub>a</sub> (.89)	†4.24 <sub>b</sub> (.80)
Legitimate	<i>M SD</i>	2.73 <sub>a</sub> (1.41)	2.87 <sub>a,b</sub> (1.40)	3.36 <sub>b</sub> (1.40)	3.55 <sub>b,c</sub> (1.54)
<b>Male negotiators</b>					
	<i>n</i>	53	47	53	52
Social outcome	<i>M SD</i>	4.06 <sub>a</sub> (1.27)	3.66 <sub>a</sub> (1.06)	3.80 <sub>a</sub> (1.49)	3.63 <sub>a</sub> (1.36)
Negotiation outcome	<i>M SD</i>	2.26 <sub>a</sub> (1.35)	2.07 <sub>a</sub> (1.17)	2.36 <sub>a</sub> (1.40)	2.38 <sub>a</sub> (1.36)
Relational	<i>M SD</i>	4.28 <sub>a</sub> (1.03)	4.00 <sub>a</sub> (.86)	3.88 <sub>a</sub> (1.34)	4.08 <sub>a</sub> (1.11)
Deferential	<i>M SD</i>	3.69 <sub>a</sub> (.87)	3.54 <sub>a</sub> (.92)	3.35 <sub>a</sub> (1.03)	3.59 <sub>a</sub> (.89)
Legitimate	<i>M SD</i>	3.10 <sub>a</sub> (1.49)	2.91 <sub>a</sub> (1.48)	3.03 <sub>a</sub> (1.73)	3.10 <sub>a</sub> (1.57)

Note. Across rows, different subscripts indicate significant mean difference at level of  $p < .05$ .

†Down columns indicate significant gender difference at level of  $p < .05$ .

had no effects on the social outcomes of male negotiators. See the bottom panel of Table 1 for the means by condition for male negotiators. In contrast, the willingness to work with female negotiators varied significantly: follow-up ANOVAs showed a main effect for the relational script,  $F(1, 193) = 5.29, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , no main effect for outside-offer account,  $F(1, 193) = .14, p > .71$ , and an interaction of Relational Script  $\times$  Outside-Offer Account,  $F(1, 193) = 6.69, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . The pattern of means in Table 1 illustrates this interaction effect on the social outcomes of female negotiators. The first row of means in Table 1 shows that the relational-script condition (i.e., with no mention of outside offer) was the only condition in which evaluators were significantly more willing to work with female negotiators as compared to the simple-negotiation condition,  $t(91) = 3.46, p < .001, d = .72$ . Combining the relational script with the outside-offer account was not effective at making female negotiators appear more relational or at improving their social outcomes as compared to simple negotiation (see Table 1,  $ps > .11$ ).

As noted in the second column of means in Table 1, evaluators reported higher willingness to work with female than male negotiators in the relational-script condition,  $t(101) = 4.50, p < .001$ . This gender difference may be because the relational script is counter-stereotypical for male negotiators, but the relational script did not diminish the willingness to work with male negotiators as compared to simple negotiation (see first row in the bottom panel of Table 1). Moreover, research on “shifting standards” suggests that the interpretation of such gender differences in subjective evaluations are clouded by the potential for participants to mentally compare female targets to women and male targets to men (Biernat, 2003).<sup>3</sup>

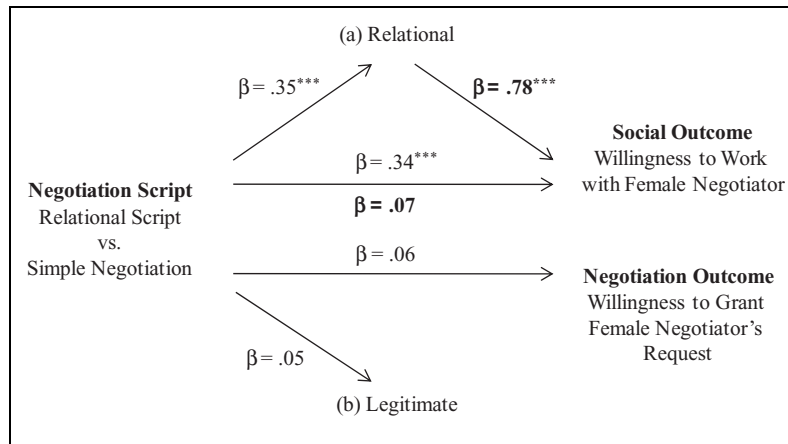
### Social Outcome: Mediation Analysis

The third row of means in Table 1 shows that relational script was also the only condition in which female negotiators appeared significantly more relational than in the simple-negotiation condition,  $t(91) = 3.52, p < .001, d = .73$ . Mediation analyses affirmed that using the relational script alone increased evaluators' willingness to work with female negotiators because they appeared more relational, Sobel  $z = 3.33, p < .001$ .<sup>4</sup> As illustrated in Figure 1A, how relational a female negotiator appeared fully mediated the effect of the relational script on the willingness to work with her. Controlling for how deferential the female negotiators appeared had almost no effect on the magnitude or significance of any of the coefficients in the mediation analysis presented in Figure 1A. Statistical mediation tests also maintained their statistical significance, Sobel  $z = 3.25, p = .001$ , controlling for deferential. These results support Hypothesis 1 because they show that evaluators were more willing to work with female negotiators when they appeared more concerned about organizational relationships.

### Negotiation Outcome

The ANOVA of the willingness to grant the compensation request revealed a significant main effect for using an outside-offer account,  $F(1, 394) = 4.39, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .01$ , and no other effects were significant. Evaluators were more willing to grant the compensation request when negotiators explained that they had an outside offer ( $M = 2.53, SD = 1.43$ ) as opposed to no offer ( $M = 2.24, SD = 1.33$ ),  $t(400) = 2.05, p = .04, d = .21$ .





**Figure 1.** Study 1, female negotiators: Graphics summarize results of mediation analyses of social outcomes conducted following Baron and Kenney's (1986) logic of mediation and illustrate the lack of influence of the relational script on negotiation outcomes. Standardized regression coefficients in plain text report simple effects; boldface indicates effects from full-model. \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### Negotiation Outcome: Mediation Analysis

Mediation analyses showed that evaluators were significantly more willing to grant requests based on an outside offer because they perceived those requests to be more legitimate, Sobel  $z = 2.25$ ,  $p = .02$ . In regression analyses, evaluators' perceptions of the legitimacy of the request fully mediated the effect of the outside-offer account on negotiation outcomes. The coefficient predicting the effect of outside-offer account on the willingness to grant the request declined from  $\beta = .10$  to  $\beta = .02$ . These results support Hypothesis 2, which predicted that legitimate accounts would increase the willingness to grant negotiation requests.

### Discussion

The results of Study 1 supported Hypotheses 1 and 2. A strategy that made female negotiators appear more relational increased participants' willingness to work with them, and a negotiating account that made compensation requests appear more legitimate increased participants' willingness to grant the request. However, no single script improved both social and negotiation outcomes for women. As illustrated in Figure 1, the relational script that improved female negotiators' social outcomes had no effect on their negotiation outcomes. When the relational script was combined with the outside-offer account, the negotiation request was perceived as more legitimate, but the relational script no longer communicated concern for organizational relationships and therefore did not improve female negotiators' social outcomes.

These results support the findings of previous research, showing that negotiating on the basis of an outside offer increases negotiation outcomes (e.g., Malhotra & Bazerman, 2007; Pinkley & Northcraft, 2000) and that conforming to the feminine stereotype helps women mitigate social backlash (for a review, see Eagly & Carli, 2007). Consistent with most research on persuasion in negotiation and gender-based social

backlash, we also saw that evaluator gender did not moderate the persuasiveness of the negotiation request or its influence on social outcomes. The important insight from Study 1 is that neither strategy is sufficient to overcome women's compensation negotiation dilemma and that, in combination, they may backfire.

In Study 2, we built upon the results of Study 1 by testing a set of relational accounts crafted to improve social and negotiation outcomes at the same time by legitimizing women's negotiating behavior in inherently relational terms. In their classic work on social accounts, Scott and Lyman (1968, p. 57) emphasized that the "idiomatic form of an account is expected to be socially suited to the circle in which it is introduced, according to norms of culture, subculture, and situation." The outside-offer account is well suited to the context of a job negotiation, but it violates normative expectations of feminine behavior (Bowles & Babcock, 2009). As shown in Study 1, the outside-offer account may even eliminate the benefits of otherwise conforming to the feminine stereotype. The aim of the relational accounts was to frame women's negotiating behavior in terms that would align with prescriptions of the feminine stereotype and make the compensation request seem legitimate.

### Study 2

In Study 2, we tested our final hypothesis that using relational accounts would improve women's social and negotiation outcomes as compared to simple negotiation. As in Study 1, we manipulated negotiator gender and the negotiation script. Negotiators used the same simple negotiation script as in Study 1 or one of two relational accounts. We devised two scripts for the relational-accounts condition because our aim was to test the general proposition that female negotiators can appear relational and make their negotiating requests seem legitimate at the same time. We did not want to confound the

general idea of a relational account with one particular script. To craft externally valid scripts that would fulfill our theoretical criteria, we complemented our insights from the literature with advice from negotiation professors, female executives, and executive coaches.

## Method

### Design and Participants

Our experiment was a 2 (Negotiator Gender: Female/Male)  $\times$  2 (Relational Account vs. Simple Negotiation) between-subject design. For it, we recruited 224 college-educated Americans with work experience using the same recruitment company and procedure as in Study 1. We excluded 47 participants (21%) who failed the comprehension test (same as in Study 1). The final sample included 177 participants (91 women, 86 men). Participants had a median age of 38 years (range: 21–75) and 249 (63%) had managerial experience ( $M_{ed} = 6$  years of experience; range: 1–45). A large majority ( $n = 161$ ; 91%) self-described as White, 7 (4%) as Black, 4 (2%) as Asian, 4 (2%) as Other, and 1 (1%) as Hispanic.

### Procedure and Materials

The procedure was the same as in Study 1, except that we randomly assigned participants to watch one of the 12 new videos, fully crossing four actors (two women and two men) with three negotiation scripts (simple negotiation or one of two relational accounts: supervisor-excuse and skill-contribution), including from 8 to 21 participants per video. We employed the same actors as in Study 1 and changed only the negotiation scripts. The dependent measures were the same as those in Study 1. The willingness-to-work composite ( $\alpha = .93$ ) was our indicator of the social outcome. The single-item measure of the willingness to grant the request was our indicator of the negotiation outcome. In mediation analyses, we again tested whether the relational composite ( $\alpha = .91$ ) would explain the willingness to work with female negotiators and whether the legitimate composite ( $\alpha = .67$ ) would explain the willingness to grant negotiation requests.<sup>5</sup> We used the deferential composite ( $\alpha = .55$ ) as a control in mediation analyses of the effects of appearing relational on the willingness to work with female negotiators. The two newly created negotiation scripts functioned as relational accounts by using distinct logics for the legitimacy of the negotiation request and differing approaches to communicating concern for organizational relationships.

The *supervisor-excuse* script aligns with the literature on “causal accounts” (Bies, 1987; Bies, Shapiro, & Cummings, 1988; Shapiro, 1991) or “excuses” (Scott & Lyman, 1968; Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009; Weiner, Amirkhan, Folkes, & Verette, 1987), which redirect responsibility for the questionable behavior away from the account maker to another person or situational factor (Sitkin & Bies, 1993):

My team leader during the training program told me that I should talk with you about my compensation. It was not clear to us whether this salary offer represents the top of the pay range. My team leader told me there is a range in terms of how much managers are paid in their first placement. He thought I should ask to be paid at the top of that range and to explain that I would also like to be eligible for an end-of-year bonus.

The essential logic of the account is, “Don’t blame me for asking for more money; blame my supervisor.” We chose to attribute the decision to negotiate to a more senior person within the organization because research suggests that women benefit even more than men from leveraging the social capital of higher status others (Burt, 1998). We made the superior a man because men tend to be attributed higher status than women (Ridgeway, 2011). To make the employee appear more relational in fulfillment of the feminine stereotype, we rephrased the simple-negotiation script from Study 1 using “we” as opposed to “I” language. Our intention was to portray the negotiator as embedded in positive organizational relationships and as a team player.

The *skill-contribution* script makes an “ideological account” (Bies, 1987; Shapiro, 1991; Simons, 2002) or “justification” (Scott & Lyman, 1968) for the negotiation behavior. Following the enactment of the simple negotiation from Study 1, the interviewee stated, “I don’t know how typical it is for people at my level to negotiate, but I’m hopeful you’ll see my skill at negotiating as something important that I bring to the job.” These types of accounts “reframe the standard or value to which the behavior is compared” so that an actor can claim, “Even though my actions were not in line with stated value X, consider that they were in line with stated value Y, which is more important” (Simons, 2002, p. 27). The negotiators frame negotiating norms as ambiguous in this situation (i.e., *I don’t know how typical it is . . .*) and then ask for their negotiating behavior to be viewed in other-oriented as opposed to egocentric terms (i.e., . . . *as something important I bring to the job*; Geddes & Callister, 2007; Shapiro, 1991). This type of other orientation also fulfills prescriptions of the feminine stereotype and of low-status actors more broadly (e.g., see Eagly, 1987; Ridgeway, 1982). In sum, we thought the skill-contribution script would make women’s negotiating behavior more socially acceptable by suggesting, “See me as a positive contributor, not a selfish demander.”

## Results

In preliminary analyses, we tested for effects of evaluator gender and found none ( $ps > .17$ ). Therefore, we did not include evaluator gender as a factor in our analyses. We also tested for actor effects within negotiator gender. We found that evaluators were slightly more willing to work with one female actor than the other ( $p = .06$ ), but the pattern of effects was the same for both actors (i.e., there were no significant

**Table 2.** Means and Standard Deviations for All Study 2 Measures Within Script Conditions.

		Negotiation Scripts		
		Simple Negotiation	Relational Accounts	
			Supervisor Excuse	Skill Contribution
Female negotiators				
	<i>n</i>	31	35	25
Social outcome	<i>M SD</i>	4.15 <sub>a</sub> (1.28)	†4.88 <sub>b</sub> (1.08)	†4.88 <sub>b</sub> (.99)
Negotiation outcome	<i>M SD</i>	1.94 <sub>a</sub> (.96)	2.97 <sub>b</sub> (1.50)	†3.00 <sub>b</sub> (1.22)
Relational	<i>M SD</i>	3.90 <sub>a</sub> (1.29)	†4.83 <sub>b</sub> (1.16)	†4.59 <sub>b</sub> (1.01)
Deferential	<i>M SD</i>	3.65 <sub>a</sub> (.71)	†4.10 <sub>b</sub> (.86)	†4.02 <sub>a,b</sub> (.78)
Legitimate	<i>M SD</i>	2.52 <sub>a</sub> (1.22)	3.09 <sub>a,b</sub> (1.60)	†3.28 <sub>b</sub> (1.06)
Male negotiators				
	<i>n</i>	33	21	32
Social outcome	<i>M SD</i>	3.81 <sub>a</sub> (1.07)	3.51 <sub>a</sub> (1.43)	3.88 <sub>a</sub> (1.47)
Negotiation outcome	<i>M SD</i>	2.18 <sub>a</sub> (1.18)	2.52 <sub>a</sub> (1.29)	2.25 <sub>a</sub> (1.14)
Relational	<i>M SD</i>	3.77 <sub>a</sub> (.76)	3.42 <sub>a</sub> (1.36)	3.74 <sub>a</sub> (1.06)
Deferential	<i>M SD</i>	3.41 <sub>a</sub> (.91)	3.46 <sub>a</sub> (1.16)	3.63 <sub>a</sub> (.65)
Legitimate	<i>M SD</i>	2.23 <sub>a</sub> (1.21)	2.71 <sub>a</sub> (1.33)	2.49 <sub>a</sub> (1.06)

Note. Across rows, different subscripts indicate significant mean difference at level of  $p < .05$ .

†Down columns indicate significant gender difference at level of  $p < .05$ .

effects of Actor  $\times$  Condition,  $ps > .38$ ). Therefore, we did not include actor as a factor in our analyses.

Table 2 presents means for female (top panel) and male (bottom panel) negotiators by negotiation script. As intended, the two relational-account scripts produced the same pattern of effects on all variables. The second and third columns of means in Table 2 present the results for the two relational-account scripts, between which there are no statistically significant differences within variable. We also conducted regression analyses in which we tested the effects of relational-account script (i.e., variable coded skill contribution vs. supervisor excuse), negotiator gender, and their interaction on our dependent measures, and we found no significant effects ( $ps > .45$ ). Reassured that there were no unanticipated statistical differences in the effects of the relational-account scripts on our dependent measures, we combined the skill-contribution and supervisor-excuse scripts into one relational-account condition.

### Social Outcome

The  $2 \times 2$  ANOVA of negotiator gender and relational account on willingness to work revealed a main effect for negotiator gender,  $F(1, 173) = 15.19, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$ , a nonsignificant effect for relational account,  $F(1, 173) = 2.88, p = .09$ , and an interaction of Negotiator Gender  $\times$  Relational Account,  $F(1, 173) = 4.44, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . We interpret this predicted higher order interaction effect by comparing the differential effects of the relational accounts on the willingness to work with female and male negotiators. As shown in Table 2, the relational accounts had a significantly positive influence on the willingness to work with female negotiators as compared to simple negotiation,

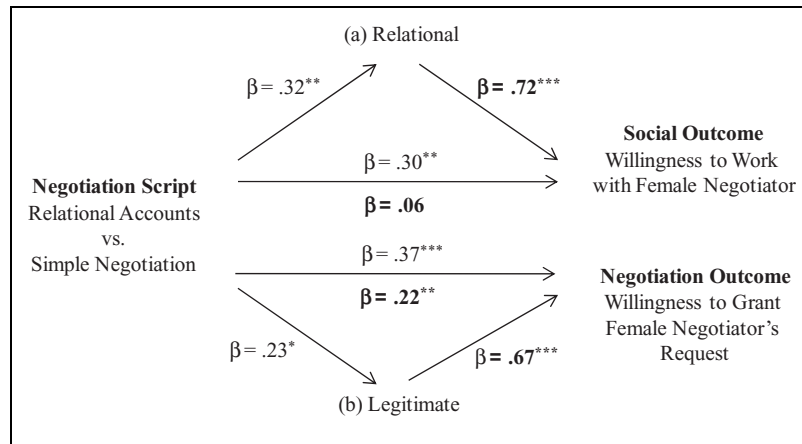
$t(89) = 2.93, p = .004, d = .63, M$  difference = .73. In contrast, the relational accounts had no effect on the willingness to work with male negotiators as compared to simple negotiation,  $t(84) = .27, p = .79, d = .06, M$  difference =  $-.08$ . The evaluations of male negotiators were lower than those of female negotiators in the relational-account conditions (second and third columns of means of Table 2), but the interpretation of this type of gender difference is muddled by the potential for shifting standards (Biernat, 2003). In sum, the negotiation script made a difference for female, but not male, negotiators.

### Social Outcome: Mediation Analysis

Figure 2A illustrates the results of mediation analyses of the effects of the relational accounts on the willingness to work with female negotiators. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, mediation analyses showed that evaluators were more willing to work with female negotiators who used relational accounts as compared to simple negotiation because the relational accounts made the female negotiators seem more relational, Sobel  $z = 3.03, p = .002$ . How relational the female negotiators appeared fully mediated the effect of the relational accounts on female negotiators' social outcomes. Controlling for how deferential the female negotiators appeared had little effect on the magnitude or significance of the regression coefficients presented in Figure 2A. Statistical mediation tests also remained significant, Sobel  $z = 2.28, p = .02$ , controlling for deferential.

### Negotiation Outcome

The  $2 \times 2$  ANOVA of the willingness to grant the request showed no main effect for negotiator gender,  $F(1, 173) = .97, p = .32$ , a main effect for using a relational



**Figure 2.** Study 2, female negotiators: Graphics summarize results of mediation analyses of social and negotiation outcomes conducted following Baron and Kenney's (1986) logic of mediation. Standardized regression coefficients in plain text report simple effects; boldface indicates effects from full-model. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

account,  $F(1, 173) = 10.17, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$ , and an interaction effect of Negotiator Gender  $\times$  Relational Account,  $F(1, 173) = 5.15, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . We interpreted this higher order interaction by examining the differential effects of the relational accounts on the negotiation outcomes of male and female negotiators. As shown in Table 2, using a relational account had no effect on the willingness to grant male negotiators' compensation requests as compared to simple negotiation,  $t(84) = .67, p = .51, d = .15, M$  difference = .18. In contrast, using a relational account significantly increased the willingness to grant female negotiators' compensation requests,  $t(89) = 3.77, p < .001, d = .88, M$  difference = 1.05. Again, the negotiation script mattered for female, but not male, negotiators.

Comparison of the results for male and female negotiators in the two relational-account conditions (second and third columns of means in Table 2) revealed that the willingness-to-grant ratings were higher for women than men when using relational accounts,  $t(111) = 2.55, p = .01, d = .48$ . This effect might reflect the gender incongruence of the relational scripts for men. However, as reported earlier, male negotiators were not penalized for using the relational accounts as compared to simple negotiation, and this comparison is difficult to interpret because of potential shifting standards (Biernat, 2003).

### Negotiation Outcome: Mediation Analysis

The bottom of Figure 2 illustrates the results of mediation analyses of the effects of the relational accounts on the willingness to grant female negotiators' compensation requests. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, mediation analyses showed that evaluators were more willing to grant the compensation requests of female negotiators who used the relational accounts because their requests were perceived to be significantly more legitimate, Sobel  $z = 2.11, p = .03$ . How

legitimate evaluators perceived the request to be partially mediated the effect of the outside-offer account on negotiation outcomes. The coefficient predicting the effect of relational accounts on negotiation outcomes declined by 41% after controlling for perceived legitimacy.

## Discussion

The results of Study 2 support Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. As depicted in Figure 2, as compared to simple negotiation, relational accounts improved the willingness to work with female negotiators by making them appear more relational and increased the willingness to grant their compensation requests by making their requests seem more legitimate. The relational scripts—designed specifically for female negotiators—had no effects on the social or negotiation outcomes of male negotiators as compared to simple negotiation. The differential effects of these relational accounts on the evaluations of female as compared to male negotiators depict how the social context of negotiation becomes a lens for the interpretation of negotiation behavior.

## General Discussion

We showed in Study 1 that conforming to gender-stereotypic behavioral conventions is not sufficient to resolve the compensation negotiation dilemma for women. Demonstrating concern for organizational relationships improved female negotiators' social outcomes, but it did not increase evaluators' willingness to grant their requests. Legitimizing compensation requests with an outside offer increased negotiation outcomes, but it did not ameliorate the social consequences for female negotiators. Indeed, the apparent incongruence between claiming concern for organizational relationships while invoking an outside offer undermined the effectiveness of communicating concern for organizational relationships. Neither independently nor in combination did

these commonly advised strategies—“act nice” and “explain that you have an outside offer”—address the dual challenge created by the compensation negotiation dilemma for women.

In Study 2, we employed two versions of relational accounts in which negotiators legitimized their compensation requests and communicated concern for organizational relationships in mutually compatible terms. Though quite different in substance and logic, these two relational accounts produced the same pattern of effect: they increased social and negotiation outcomes as compared to simple negotiation by making female negotiators appear more relational and their requests more legitimate. The relational accounts had no significant effects on either the social or material outcomes of male negotiators.

### *Theoretical Contributions*

Our research extends the social backlash literature by introducing relational accounts as a strategy for overcoming double binds, such as the compensation negotiation dilemma for women. Specifically, we find that female negotiators can reduce social resistance to their self-advocacy and improve their negotiation outcomes if they legitimize their requests in a manner that also communicates their concern for organizational relationships. Our research advances the negotiation literature by challenging the notions that prescriptive gender stereotypes prevent female negotiators from self-advocating effectively and that women pursue positive relational outcomes at the expense of competitive negotiation objectives. Prescriptive stereotypes are a barrier to women's self-advocacy in negotiation (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2007; Wade, 2001) but backlash is not inevitable. The two relational accounts tested in Study 2 improved female negotiators' social and negotiation outcomes at the same time.

In a field dominated by an economic logic of performance, our studies also reinforce the importance of studying both social and material outcomes in negotiation (Curhan, Elfenbein, & Xu, 2006). Focusing only on the immediate material payoffs from negotiation, we would not have come to understand that it is reasonable for women to be more reticent than men about negotiating for themselves for higher compensation (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2007; Wade, 2001). Conversely, an exclusive focus on overcoming social backlash against female negotiators would have prevented us from recognizing the importance of providing a legitimizing account for the compensation request. Negotiation theory is more relevant and useful to practice when it encompasses the social and material motivations for and the implications of negotiation behavior.

Finally, our research adds nuance to the study of social accounts in negotiation by demonstrating the potential moderating effect of salient aspects of the account maker's social identity on evaluators' impressions of and responsiveness to a

negotiating bid. Crafted specifically for women, the relational accounts had significantly positive effects on the social and negotiation outcomes of female negotiators—and no effects on the outcomes of male negotiators. Though commonly advised to negotiators in general, the outside-offer account undermined female negotiators' attempts to improve their social outcomes. More research is needed to understand how salient social identities and their meaning in context color the enactment and interpretation of negotiation behavior. This is not to say that no negotiation advice can be generally applied, but rather that negotiators should become astute analysts of both the social context and the economic structure of negotiation (e.g., interests and alternatives, distributive and integrative potential).

### *Limitations and Future Research Directions*

Several limitations of this research should be noted. First, we present tests of a small number of negotiating scripts, which obviously cannot generalize widely enough to cover all compensation negotiations. In particular, we limited the set of negotiation issues to include only compensation. Although this choice enhanced experimental control, it precluded the potential for collaborative problem solving across issues. With multiple issues on the table, a negotiator might be able to communicate concern for organizational relationships and enhance the perceived legitimacy of her compensation request through the negotiation process itself (e.g., see “appreciative” moves suggested by Kolb & Williams, 2000). Future research could test whether presenting pay as one of multiple issues for negotiation dampens the risk of backlash against women negotiating for higher compensation.

Second, even the few scripts we tested would benefit from examination by a broader array of dependent measures. For instance, there is evidence that excuse-based accounts undermine managers' perceived power and leadership (Bobocel, Agar, Meyer, & Irving, 1998). Future research could explore whether attributing negotiating behavior to a superior lowers one's perceived status or whether the superior's gender affects the account's acceptability. Future research should also test accounts crafted to address women's other social identities (e.g., race, motherhood, sexual orientation) and accounts tailored to men's identities as negotiators.

A third important methodological limitation is that we were not studying actual compensation negotiations. The impressions that negotiators make in direct interaction are likely to be stronger, more vivid, and potentially more nuanced than the impressions made in our studies. Ideally, we would test the robustness of the compensation negotiation dilemma across contrasting organizational settings, accounting for factors such as the relationship between parties and the cultural and organizational context. Indeed, variation in the organizational context is likely to be an important moderator of the potential for backlash effects. For instance, research on backlash in hiring indicates that women are

penalized more harshly when being considered for more stereotypically feminine jobs (Rudman & Glick, 1999). The salience and content of gender stereotypes within the work context are likely to shape the effects of gender on negotiation behavior and outcomes (Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002; Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001; Schneider, Tinsley, Cheldelin, & Amanatullah, 2010). The degree of ambiguity surrounding compensation negotiations within the organization is also likely to influence the potential for gender effects. Research on gender in negotiation strongly suggests that gender stereotypes are more influential when there is more ambiguity about what is up for negotiation or how one should behave (Bowles et al., 2005; Kray & Gelfand, 2009). Although experimental methods have numerous advantages for establishing experimental control and causality, richer theory requires deeper and more systematic exploration of how the negotiation context varies for men and women across organizational, industry, and occupational contexts.

### Practice Implications

When U.S. President Obama chose the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act as the first legislation he signed publically, he said that he was sending the message that “making our economy work means making sure it works for everyone” (Stolberg, 2009; White House Council on Women and Girls, 2012, p. 3). Ledbetter was a top-performing executive who found out belatedly that she had been paid only 87 cents on the dollar as compared to the lowest paid man in her position (*Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, 2007). On the heels of the Fair Pay Act, complementary legislation called the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 12 and S. 182) was introduced in the U.S. Congress; in part, it advocated for negotiation training to help remedy the nation’s gender pay gap. The current research could inform the ongoing debate regarding whether negotiation training could play a role in addressing unfair pay and closing the gender pay gap.

Our research shows that negotiation training for women should be grounded in a research-based understanding of the social psychological context of gender and work and that prescriptive advice should be tailored to the specific opportunities and constraints that women face when they negotiate. It is important to recognize that it is reasonable for women to refrain from negotiating compensation to avoid social backlash (Bowles et al., 2007), but it is equally important to show women that they do not need to choose between prioritizing social or negotiation outcomes. Our studies suggest one path out of this dilemma for negotiation teachers, trainers, and women in management to explore.

We do not see our research as providing specific scripts that women should use but rather the outlines of one possible strategy. We recognize that some people will bristle at the practical implications of this research. For some women, the idea of crafting a relational account may feel inauthentic or

even offensive: why should they conform to an unjust standard? Others may perceive relational accounts as a reinforcement of gender stereotypes: Could the successful application of relational accounts create a social hierarchy that rewards women who conform to gender stereotypes and implicitly penalizes those who do not? We share these concerns. If we could choose the results of our experiments, we would prefer to uncover a more liberated context for gender in negotiation.

However, we also see in our results the possibility for individual agency to overcome entrapment. The anticipation of social backlash or pay discrimination is taxing for women and undermining of their human potential (Fischer & Holz, 2010; Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010). The motivation for this research was to offer strategies that women could use to change their personal circumstances and to send the message that, while gender constraints are real, they are not inescapable. Moreover, when women rectify gender inequalities, they do so not for themselves alone.

Gender stereotypes stem from the social hierarchy between men and women within society (Eagly, 1987; Ridgeway, 2011). We expect men to be in charge because typically they are, and we expect men to earn more because typically they do. Research suggests that when women break glass ceilings, they do so for others as well as for themselves. For instance, when more women gain high-status managerial positions, the gender pay gap reduces for lower level workers (Cohen & Huffman, 2007). We hope that some women will put the insights from our research into practice because every woman who reduces the gender gap in pay and authority reforms the social structures that keep women in their place.

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## Notes

- Using the simple-negotiation script, we replicated Bowles et al.'s (2007) finding that evaluators (i.e., American adults with work experience) were disinclined to work with women who negotiated versus not ( $p < .05$  for interaction of Employee Gender  $\times$  Negotiate: Yes/No). There was a negative main effect on women's social outcomes ( $p < .05$ ) and no effect on men's.
- For completeness in Study 1, we tested for unexpected effects of legitimate on the willingness to work with female negotiators and of relational on the willingness to grant requests. We observed no significant unexpected effects.
- Main-effect gender-difference comparisons are vulnerable to shifting standards when evaluators make subjective assessments in the absence of an explicit comparison standard (Biernat, 2003; Biernat, Manis, & Nelson, 1991). For instance, if Jane and John performed similarly on a softball team, evaluators might judge Jane as "excellent" and John as "average" because they compare Jane to other women and John to other men and they believe men are better players than women (Biernat & Vescio, 2002). This shifting standards problem applies to both of our dependent measures. Willingness to work is vulnerable because women tend to have less management training, work experience, and lower ranking positions than men. Therefore, the same employee could look "excellent" for a woman but "average" for a man. Willingness to grant is vulnerable because evaluators could make different inferences about the gender distribution of employees within the relevant pay range after evaluating only one employee. Willingness to pay women at the top of the range could decline if employees compensated in that range were mostly men as opposed to women (Belliveau, 2005; Heilman, 1980; Major, 1989).
- Pretesting the simple-negotiation and relational-script conditions with undergraduates, we replicated the findings that the relational script increases women's social outcomes more than men's ( $p = .04$  for interaction of Negotiator Gender  $\times$  Relational Script) and that the relational script improves women's social outcomes because they appear more relational ( $p = .06$ ).
- For completeness in Study 2, we tested for unexpected effects of legitimate on the willingness to work with female negotiators and of relational on the willingness to grant female negotiators' requests. We found that legitimate was a significant mediator of the willingness to work with female negotiators, but multiple mediation analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) revealed that the explanatory power of relational on the willingness to work with female negotiators trumped how legitimate their requests appeared. When both potential mediators were included in the analyses, legitimate was no longer significant. Similarly, we found that relational was a significant mediator of the willingness to grant female negotiators' requests. However, multiple mediation analyses showed that the primary explanation for the willingness to grant female negotiators' requests was the perceived legitimacy of the request and not how relational the candidate appeared.

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