

Ask and Ye Shall Receive? How Gender and Status Moderate Negotiation Success

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Abstract

The backlash effect is a well-documented negative social reaction toward women who are seen as violating gender norms because they engage in counterstereotypical (noncommunal, agentic) behaviors during the performance of their jobs. This social disincentive has been shown to account for women's diminished likelihood to initiate negotiations relative to men. But we question whether women who ignored this disincentive and initiated negotiations would even receive the resources they requested. We extend past research by showing women also incur financial penalties for initiating negotiations. This financial penalty can be explained by women's lower ascribed status relative to men's status and fortunately can be attenuated if women have achieved status. In two studies, we find consistent evidence that women who ask do not receive unless they have externally conferred status.

Women don't ask (Babcock & Laschever, 2003), but would they receive if they did? Gender disparities in the workforce, such as the wage gap in compensation (Schneer & Reitman, 1995; Stroh, Brett, & Reilly, 1992) and the underrepresentation of women in upper-level management (Catalyst, 2010; Gutek, 1993; Wells, 2001), may be at least partially explained by women's reduced propensity to initiate negotiations relative to men (Babcock, Gelfand, Small, & Stayn, 2006; Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman, 2007). Scholars argue that this behavior might represent a rational response to the social disincentives that women experience when initiating (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007) and pursuing self-interested outcomes in negotiations (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010).

These social disincentives are synonymous with what has been termed the *backlash effect*, a negative reaction toward women who violate traditional gender norms (Rudman, 1998). Studies have demonstrated that women who engage in traditionally masculine behaviors can be successful in increasing their perceived competency in masculine domains, such as managerial effectiveness and leadership potential, but simultaneously incur social sanctions for violating expectations of femininity (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013). Their communality is questioned, and as such, they are perceived as irrational, unlikeable, and unattractive (e.g., Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001). Anticipating this backlash, women may alter their behavior to avoid being perceived as counterstereotypical and incurring these social penalties (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). In other words, female negotiators may forgo self-serving outcomes for the sake of avoiding social punishment.

However, if women were willing to accept the social repercussions, would they even be able to reap the financial rewards of initiating negotiations, and if not, why? We turn to the literature on the maintenance of social norms and reactions to status challenges to extract insights underlying the motivation of perceivers, both male and female, to punish norm-violating behavior. Consistent with nascent research

on the causes that underlie backlash, we argue that implicit challenges to the social order motivate the backlash effect against women (Rudman, Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Nauts, 2012) and that these sanctions are not merely social (for example, being perceived as unlikable or lacking warmth) but have financial consequences as well.

In general, men enjoy greater ascribed status than women (Basow, 1986; Ickes & Knowles, 1982; Kanter, 1977). We argue that because high-status individuals can engage in status asserting behavior without negative consequences (Ridgeway & Berger, 1986; Sampson, 1963, 1969), the observation in the gender and negotiation literature that men are able to stake claim to resources without punishment relative to women may be a function of this ascribed status based on gender. Although gender is not synonymous with status, research on power and framing of negotiation opportunities has found that when women (who traditionally occupy positions of low power) are primed with high power, gender differences in propensity to initiate negotiations were attenuated (Small et al., 2007). Thus, the observation that female negotiators are socially punished for engaging in assertive, value-claiming behavior, or initiating negotiations may be indicative of their unwarranted claims to resources as low-status (or low-power) actors and not simply a function of violating gender role stereotypes as prior literature suggests. Therefore, if female negotiators were to somehow achieve a certain level of status, they might be able to effectively assert claims over resources without incurring negative sanctions typically observed in studies of the backlash effect. In other words, although men enjoy higher ascribed status than women generally, when women have achieved a level of status they should be able to engage in resource-seeking behaviors with impunity from both social sanctions and financial penalties.

Across two experimental studies, we show that women conferred high achieved status are perceived as having more legitimate claims to resources and are subsequently less likely to incur social sanctions and more likely to be given the financial resources they ask for relative to women without achieved status. For women with externally conferred status, their resource requests are viewed as consistent with their higher achieved status rather than in conflict with lower ascribed (gender) status.

The Backlash Effect

Gender roles operate as socially shared expectations regarding the appropriate behavior of men and women in society (Eagly, 1987). In this way, they operate as social norms, carrying both descriptive and injunctive functions (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). The former describes how men and women are and how they behave on average. The injunctive function carries a stronger, prescriptive component, setting standards for how men and women *ought* to behave (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Violating gender roles is thus tantamount to violating social norms, resulting in social punishment to enforce conformity to societal standards (Cialdini & Trost, 1998).

Prior research documents male gender roles as *agentic* (assertive, dominant, competitive, decisive), whereas female gender roles are *communal* (nurturing, affectionate, helpful, concerned for others; Bakan, 1966; Bem, 1974; Eagly, 1987; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Spence & Sawin, 1985). People generally approve of the communal qualities associated with women and the agentic qualities associated with men (Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Williams & Best, 1990). Women are thus viewed more favorably when their behavior is aligned with feminine roles and responsibilities (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Wood, Christensen, Hebl, & Rothgerber, 1997).

When women violate these norms, it can result in a social backlash (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999) because they are perceived to lack the communal qualities that they *ought* to embody as ascribed by the feminine gender stereotype (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). Empirical evidence consistently documents that women who behave assertively are perceived to be unattractive, irrational, and socially unskilled relative to men who act the same way (Butler & Geis, 1990; Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Rudman, 1998). Indeed, negative behavior toward women in the workplace, such as sexual harassment, has been argued to be a hostile reaction

toward women because they are in violation of gender roles (e.g., “uppity” women; Berdahl, 2007). One study found that displaying masculine characteristics enhanced others’ perceptions of a woman’s ability to the point that it was considered the equivalent of a man’s (Rudman & Glick, 1999). However, these women were also considered socially unskilled and less worthy of hire. These negative social judgments had tangible consequences as women who displayed masculine characteristics were less likely to be hired than equally competent male candidates.

We extend these findings to negotiations, proposing that women who lack other sources of status yet still display assertive characteristics will be judged negatively and suffer tangible financial penalties. However, because we argue this backlash stems from women’s low ascribed status (so that her resource claims are perceived as illegitimate status challenges), backlash against women with high externally conferred status should be muted.

The Backlash Effect in Negotiations

In past empirical work, there have been some inconsistencies on the role of gender in negotiations (for review, see Kray & Thompson, 2005), with some researchers finding that, relative to men, women negotiating their interests do worse financially (c.f. King & Hinson, 1994) and socially (Bowles et al., 2007), whereas others find that women do just as well (c.f. Kimmel, Pruitt, Magenau, Konar-Goldband, & Carnevale, 1980; Pruitt, Carnevale, Forcey, & Van Slyck, 1986). However, when focusing on distributive negotiations, meta-analyses have shown that women are less competitive and negotiate less favorable outcomes than men (Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999; Walters, Stuhlmacher, & Meyer, 1998). This suggests that situational variables might influence when gender becomes a factor in negotiation outcomes rather than innate personality differences. However, little research has thoroughly explored why gender affects negotiations in some contexts compared to others.

We explore the context of workplace negotiations between two parties from different companies. When one party approaches the other to request a refund, we argue that this type of request is an assertive claim for resources. One basis upon which the other party will judge the appropriateness of this request is the status of the resource requester, specifically whether or not the requester has enough status to warrant the assertive resource request. Since men have higher ascribed status than women (Basow, 1986; Kanter, 1977), their requests, *ceteris paribus*, are likely to be seen as more legitimate and more likely to be granted than women’s requests.

Prior bargaining research would support this assertion, that women’s requests for resources will be seen as less legitimate than men’s. First, women are less likely than men to initiate a negotiation in the absence of strong norms dictating a requirement to negotiate or an option to ask (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Babcock et al., 2006), suggesting women implicitly or explicitly understand that their initiation could be seen as inappropriate. Second, research on the other side of the bargaining table finds that sellers often set higher prices if they think they will be facing women (Ayres & Siegelman, 1995), suggesting sellers anticipate women are less likely to initiate bargaining (a self-censoring which again may be driven by women’s internalization of social norms). Third, female initiators are evaluated more negatively than males (Bowles et al., 2007), except when this behavior is seen as appropriate given specific contextual norms (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013; Kray & Gelfand, 2009) or (at least for compensation requests) when relational accounts are also employed (Bowles & Babcock, 2013). Finally, in studies of ultimatum games, more is demanded from women (Solnick, 2001), especially those who are physically attractive (Solnick & Schweitzer, 1999), suggesting people may think women are entitled to fewer resources than men.

We argue that what underlies these prior results could be the fact that it is socially acceptable for women, as relatively low-status actors vis-à-vis men, to receive fewer resources. Yet, as noted above, if female negotiators’ requests could be endowed with a social legitimacy, it would no longer be socially acceptable for women to receive fewer resources. In the following section, we explain how externally conferred status endows women’s requests with legitimacy and thus should moderate any backlash.

Gender and Social Status

Traditionally, women have occupied positions of lower status relative to men in U.S. society (Basow, 1986; Ickes & Knowles, 1982; Kanter, 1977). In absence of more relevant and salient status-ordering information, gender becomes an indicator of ascribed status of an individual and is used as a default characteristic by which individuals' behaviors are evaluated (Ridgeway & Bourg, 2004). Thus, women without legitimizing authority who behave assertively are perceived as violating the social order because status asserting behavior should be reserved for high-status actors (Ridgeway & Berger, 1986; Sampson, 1963, 1969) and will be perceived as a status conflict (see Bendersky & Hays, 2012). Judgments of relative status (who is dominant vs. subordinate) are made very quickly in new social interactions (Kalma, 1991) with nearly instantaneous status orderings based on diffuse characteristics such as gender (for review, see Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980). These status judgments lead people to aggress against lower status actors who violate social norms (Cummins, 1999) and react with more resistance to status challenges made by lower status actors (Porath, Overbeck, & Pearson, 2008). Social order is maintained not only through dominance by high-status actors but also through low-status actors recognizing their subordinate position and conforming appropriately, such as inhibiting their resource-seeking behaviors (see MacLean, 1990). If resignation by the low-status actor is critical to preserving a dominant–submissive relationship, then assertive, resource-claiming behavior by lower status actors should be punished in order to preserve the social structure. Hence, resource requests made by women who lack other sources of achieved status should be perceived as less legitimate relative to an equivalent request made by men.

However, if a woman is conferred status by another characteristic that is made salient above and beyond her gender, then it is possible her behavior will not be perceived as a threat to social order and as such will not be met with resistance or backlash. Status characteristics theory notes that part of an individual's status is inferred from diffuse characteristics (such as age, cohort, or gender) while another part is derived from individual-specific information, such as that individual's occupation or role (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977; Berger et al., 1980). Thus, people evaluate targets both based on group-level information (gender) and on individuating information (task performance, organizational position). Although group-level information prescribes a *first cut* as to how a target might be evaluated, the target's individual information refines this initial stereotypic evaluation. In this way, a woman's individuating status information might modify the cues evoked by her group-level information (gender). If so, then externally conferred status could allow a woman to initiate a resource-based negotiation with legitimacy and hence without suffering both social and financial penalties.

Summary of Predictions

We argue that gendered backlash is a function of status-based challenges to a social order. Since women have traditionally occupied positions of lower social status than men (Basow, 1986; Ickes & Knowles, 1982; Kanter, 1977), we assume that in the absence of externally conferred status, women are perceived as lower status than men in the same position. Because low-status actors are not entitled to as much as high-status actors, we predict that resource requests made by women should be met by both social and financial backlash.

Hypothesis 1a: Relative to men, women who initiate resource requests will be more likely to incur social backlash.

Hypothesis 1b: Relative to men, women who initiate resource requests will be less likely to receive financial compensation.

However, gender as an ascribed status is only one of many sources of status. We argue that when status is signaled by other characteristics, such as job title, resource requests made by women will no longer be

perceived as less legitimate than comparable requests made by men. In other words, externally conferred status should moderate the social and financial penalties suffered by women who request resources. Externally conferred status should have a significantly larger impact on the legitimacy of a resource request made by women, relative to men, because of women's lower ascribed (gender) status, and should subsequently attenuate both social and financial punishment.

Hypothesis 2a: Achieved status will moderate social and financial backlash against women who initiate resource requests. Relative to women with high achieved status and to men, women without achieved status who initiate a resource request will be socially punished.

Hypothesis 2b: Achieved status will moderate social and financial backlash against women who initiate resource requests. Relative to women with high achieved status and to men, women without achieved status who initiate a resource request will be less likely to receive resources.

In line with this reasoning, we predict that perceptions of legitimacy should mediate the moderated effect of gender by conferred status on backlash outcomes.

Hypothesis 3a: Perceived legitimacy will mediate the moderated effect of gender by achieved status on social backlash.

Hypothesis 3b: Perceived legitimacy will mediate the moderated effect of gender by achieved status on financial backlash.

We test the proposed hypotheses across two empirical studies of a workplace negotiation. Study 1 offers *proof of concept* by testing whether or not during negotiations between two companies, a female negotiator requesting a resource refund will suffer higher financial penalty than a male, unless that female's work position signals externally conferred status. Study 2 explores more fully whether conferral of achieved status moderates the perceived legitimacy of resource requests and whether this mediates subsequent social and financial backlash against women.

Study 1: Financial Backlash and Moderation by Conferred Status

In this first study, we seek to replicate patterns of social backlash on financial variables in our context of business-to-business workplace negotiations. Prior research has shown that women are socially punished relative to men requesting resources, either for initiating negotiations or when asking for compensation. We test whether women will incur penalties in a business-to-business negotiation (where they are again asking for resources) and whether this penalty could be financial rather than merely social. Further, we test whether conferred status moderates this financial backlash against female negotiators. We predict that high-status female negotiators suffer fewer penalties than low-status female negotiators who initiate a resource request. Because this study is the first attempt to replicate patterns of social backlash on financial variables, we chose to reduce any potential biases by solely focusing on financial responses to resource requests (Hypotheses 1b and 2b).

Methods

Participants

Data for this study were collected from a sample of 105 undergraduate students with an average age of 21.3 years ($SD = 2.9$). Participants received extra credit in business foundations for their participation in a battery of experiment within which our materials were administered. The total sample comprised 52.9% women.

Procedure

All participants read a scenario in which they were asked to imagine themselves as a hotel manager doing business with an event planner named Chris. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four manipulated conditions based on the study's 2 (gender: male, female) \times 2 (achieved status: low, high) factorial design. In the scenario, participants read that Chris had booked hotel rooms for a company retreat but that 24 hour prior to the event some rooms needed to be canceled. However, the hotel had a well-posted policy of no cancellations less than 48 hours in advance. For the full text, see Appendix 1. After reading through the scenario, participants were asked to indicate how likely they would be to grant the refund request.

Variables

Gender

Gender of the target was manipulated, as described above, using gender-specific pronouns in reference to a gender-neutral name of the target.

Achieved Status

Achieved status of the target was manipulated. In the low-status condition, Chris was introduced as "a newly hired Junior Officer in Human Resources still learning about event planning for his [her] firm." In the high-status condition, Chris was introduced as "the Executive Vice President for Human Resources with a long history of success at his [her] firm." This manipulation incorporates two types of specific status characteristics (rank and performance) to create a stronger prime to outweigh the ascription of status based on gender.

Financial Backlash

Our dependent variable in this study is financial response to the resource request. We asked respondents to indicate their likelihood to refund the full amount of money to Chris. Using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (very likely), respondents answered, "How likely are you to give Chris the \$500 refund?" The mean response for this measure was 3.14 ($SD = 1.75$).

Analysis and Results

To test our hypotheses that evaluators will be less likely to give financial resources to women relative to men (Hypothesis 1b) and that high achieved status would moderate this effect (Hypothesis 2b), we conducted linear regression analyses with *likelihood to issue the full refund* as the dependent variable and gender, status, and the interaction of gender and status as the predictor variables (See Table 1). There was a significant main effect of status but not of gender. Although this lack of a main effect of gender is inconsistent with our prediction in hypothesis 1b, we believe it is qualified by the significant interaction as predicted in hypothesis 2b ($B[SE] = 1.43[0.67]$, $t[101] = 2.17$, $p = .03$). Mean ratings of likelihood to issue the full refund are plotted in Figure 1. Low-status women were less likely to be given the refund relative to women with high achieved status (low-status female target: $M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.17$ vs. high-status female target: $M = 3.79$, $SD = 2.04$; $t[49] = -3.27$, $p = .002$). As further demonstration that conferrals of achieved status are more consequential for women than men who have ascribed status based on their gender, there was no such difference between responses to the resource requests made by low or high-status men (low-status male target: $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.66$ vs. high-status male target: $M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.65$; $t[52] = 0.75$, $p = ns$). Further, a confirmatory four-way contrast test showed that respondents were less likely to give Chris the refund when she was a low-status female relative to all other conditions ($t[101] = 2.99$, $p = .004$).

Table 1
 Study 1: Regression Analyses Testing Main Effects and Interaction of Gender and Status on Likelihood to Refund Money

	Main effects			Interaction effect		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Gender	-0.20	0.34	-.06	-0.92	0.47	-.27
Status	0.83	0.34	.24*	0.14	0.46	.04
Gender \times status				1.43	0.67	.36*
Adjusted R^2			.04			.07

Note. *N* = 105. Gender is coded as 0 for men and 1 for women; Status is coded as 0 for low status and 1 for high status. **p* < .05.

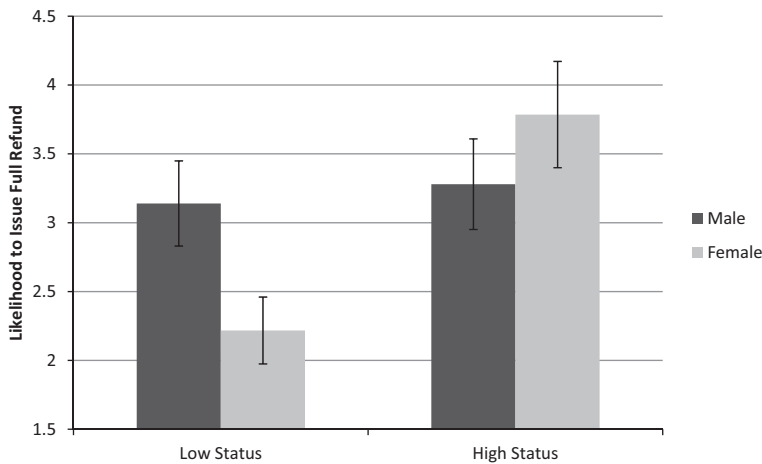


Figure 1. Study 1: Likelihood to issue full refund by target gender and organizational status. Bars represent mean likelihood ratings by gender and status; vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

Discussion

Isolating the results of the low-status condition suggests that women without externally conferred status who do ask do not receive. That is, there is a financial backlash that mirrors the heretofore established social backlash found in other research (e.g., Rudman, 1998). Moreover, the general pattern of backlash found in prior negotiation studies (of initiating negotiations or compensation negotiations) is also found in our business-to-business negotiation domain. As predicted, externally conferred status can attenuate the backlash suffered by women who ask. We proposed that externally conferred status endows a women’s request with legitimacy to explain why backlash is attenuated. We explore this legitimizing effect of achieved status for female negotiators more directly in Study 2. We also note that our status manipulation confounded both status based on job title (Junior Officer vs. Executive Vice President) and status based on past performance (by detailing that the EVP had a long history of success with the firm). We cut this last phrase from materials in our next study to offer a more conservative operationalization of achieved status.

Study 2: The Mediating Effect of Legitimacy

In this study, we seek to replicate the finding in Study 1 that resource requests are responded to differently when posed by a man versus a woman and that conferred status moderates this effect. We assess

both the likelihood of social backlash against low-status women for violating gender expectations and financial backlash. Further, we test perceived legitimacy of the resource request and attributions of (in) competence of the requestor as mediators of these backlash effects.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

Data for this study were collected from a sample of 179 undergraduate students, with an average age of 21.1 years ($SD = 2.2$). Participants received extra credit for their participation in a battery of experiments within which our materials were administered. The total sample comprised 63.7% women. We used a similar hotel scenario as in Study 1 (see Appendix 2) and expanded the postscenario questionnaire to measure additional dependent variables and potential mediators.

Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study were both manipulated in the text of the vignette. Gender was manipulated using a male (Mark) and female (Mary) name as well as associated pronouns. We simplified the manipulation of conferred status to reduce the confounding of status with performance and competence. In this study, we only used job title as our manipulation of status. In the low-status condition, the resource requester was presented as “a newly hired Junior Officer in Human Resources” and in the high-status condition as “the Executive Vice President for Human Resources.” We acknowledge that this manipulation implicitly confounds status with experience or tenure; thus, to confirm our manipulation of status was successful, we asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement that “Mark[Mary] has low social status.” Answers ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *to a great extent* and were reverse-coded such that a higher score indicates more perceived social status.

Dependent Variables

Our dependent variables in this study were measures of social backlash and financial backlash. We collected two measures of social backlash based on prior research in this area (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013). First, we measured peer-related social backlash using a 6-item scale measuring desire to interact with the target individual in both personal and work-based contexts. This scale includes items such as “Is Mark/Mary the type of person you like to work with?” and “How interested would you be in interacting socially with Mark/Mary?” and demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .93$). Responses ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*. Note that a higher score on these items indicates greater social acceptance of the target individual. The mean response was 3.73 ($SD = 1.36$). Second, we measured an upward-directed social backlash termed *leadership backlash*, which asked participants to rate on the same 7-point scale, “To what extent do you believe Mark/Mary would make a good leader?” and “Would you like to be on a project team led by Mark/Mary?” ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.50$, $\alpha = .83$).

As in Study 1, to measure financial backlash, we asked respondents to indicate their likelihood to refund the full amount of money. Using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all likely* to 7 = *very likely*, respondents answered, “How likely are you to give Mark/Mary the \$500 refund?” The mean response for this measure was 3.85 ($SD = 1.78$).

Mediators

We measured perceived legitimacy of the resource request as a mediator of these backlash effects. We created a 4-item scale, which included the following items: “Mark/Mary’s request for a refund is legitimate,” “How appropriate was Mark/Mary’s behavior?” “How incorrect was Mark/Mary’s behavior?” (reverse-coded), and “How suitable was Mark/Mary’s behavior?” ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.15$, $\alpha = .79$). Responses ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *to a great extent*.

Analysis and Results

Correlations among study variables are presented in Table 2. We began with the manipulation check to verify that participants perceived status differences across conditions. There was a marginally significant difference in the perceived status of targets, which confirms our manipulations (high-status condition: $M = 5.47, SD = 1.10$ vs. low-status condition: $M = 5.12, SD = 1.36, t[177] = 1.89, p = .06$). Although we would have liked our manipulation to be stronger, this weak manipulation makes for a conservative test of hypotheses. Moreover, the reason for the marginal significance can be found by examining the interaction between gender and condition, plotted in Figure 2. As this interaction shows, the status manipulation had a significant effect on the female targets (Mary as Junior HR officer, $M = 4.81; SD = 1.45$; Mary as EVP of HR, $M = 5.49; SD = 1.14, t[85] = 2.43, p = .02$), but not on the male targets (Mark as junior HR officer, $M = 5.41; SD = 1.20$; Mark as EVP of HR, $M = 5.46; SD = 1.07, t[90] = 0.18, p = .86$). This result is consistent with our underlying assumption that externally conferred status (via job title) has a much larger impact on the evaluation of female rather than male targets. For

Table 2
Study 2: Correlations Among Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Gender							
2 Status	.02						
3 Competence	.01	.21					
4 Likeability	-.03	.03	.50				
5 Legitimacy	.02	.12	.56	.53			
6 Social acceptance	.01	.00	.56	.61	.62		
7 Leadership potential	.02	.09	.61	.54	.56	.70	
8 Likelihood to give refund	-.02	.17	.47	.41	.61	.52	.42

Note. $N = 179$. Gender is coded as 0 for men and 1 for women; status is coded as 0 for low status and 1 for high status. Correlations $>.15$ significant at $p < .05$. Correlations $>.20$ significant at $p < .01$. Correlations $>.40$ significant at $p < .001$.

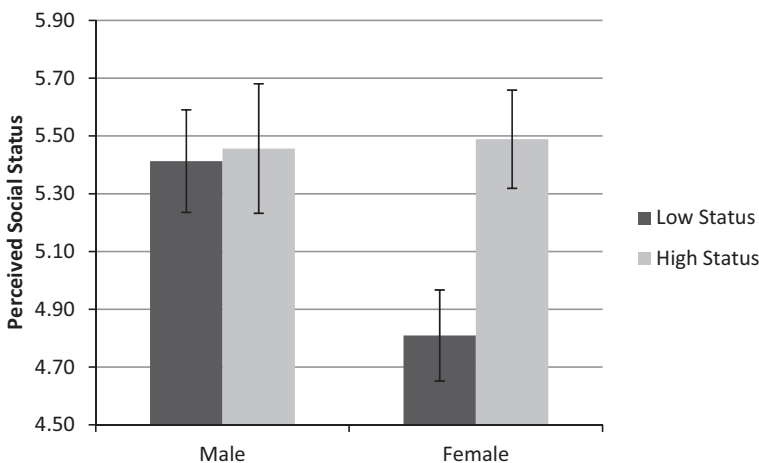


Figure 2. Study 2: Ratings of social status by target gender and organizational status. Bars represent mean refund offers by gender and status; vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

male targets, because they already have ascribed status based on their gender, externally achieved status (via job title) is less relevant.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that women initiating resource requests (a) will incur social backlash and (b) will be less likely to receive financial recompense. We tested these direct effects of gender using linear regression analyses. The direct effect of gender was nonsignificant for all three dependent variables, social ($B[SE] = -0.02[0.20]$, $t[177] = 0.12$, $p = .91$), leader ($B[SE] = 0.05[0.22]$, $t[177] = 0.23$, $p = .82$), and financial backlash ($B[SE] = -0.08[0.27]$, $t[177] = 0.28$, $p = .78$). However, because our subsequent hypotheses propose moderated (H2) and mediated moderation effects (H3), the lack of simple direct effects may be qualified by these more complex relationships.

To test hypothesis 2 that externally conferred status will moderate the relationship between gender and backlash, both social and financial (Hypotheses 2a and 2b, respectively), we conducted linear regression analyses entering gender and status condition in the first step followed by the interaction term in the second step (see Table 3). There was a significant interaction effect of gender and status on social backlash ($B[SE] = 0.85[0.40]$, $t[175] = 2.10$, $p = .04$). As observed in the means plotted in Figure 3, both low-status women and high-status men suffered social penalties for making this resource request.

Table 3
Study 2: Regression Analyses Testing Main Effects and Interaction of Gender and Status on Backlash and Statistical Mediation by Perceived Legitimacy

	Social backlash			Leader backlash			Financial backlash		
Gender	.01	.15	.08	.02	-.20	-.13	-.02	-.20	-.13
Status	.00	.15	.35	.09	-.11	-.19	.17*	.00	-.41
Gender*status		-.27*	-.11		.36**	.22*		.30*	.14
Legitimacy			-.56***			.52***			.48***
Status*legitimacy			-.23			.11			.47
Adjusted R ²	.00	.01	.38	.00	.04	.32	.02	.04	.39

Notes. $N = 179$. Table entries represent standardized beta coefficients. Gender is coded as 0 for men and 1 for women; status is coded as 0 for low status and 1 for high status.

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

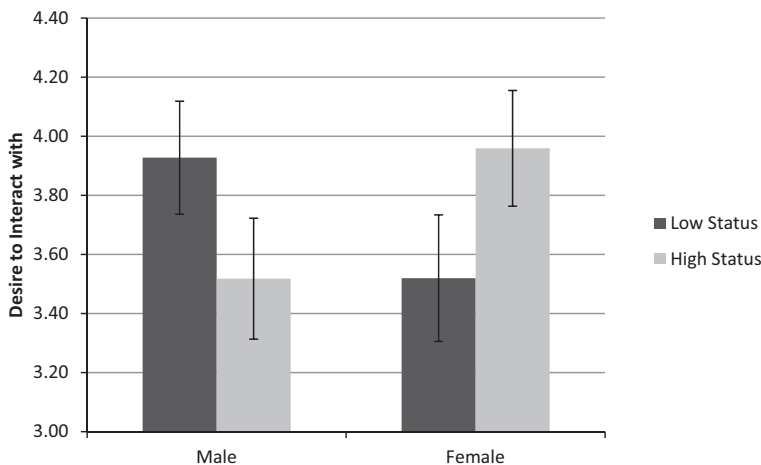


Figure 3. Study 2: Social backlash by target gender and organizational status. Bars represent mean refund offers by gender and status; vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

The former confirms hypothesis 2a; the latter is put into perspective when analyzing the effect of gender and status on leadership backlash. Again, we found a significant interaction effect for leadership backlash ($B[SE] = 1.24[0.44]$, $t[175] = 2.82$, $p = .01$). Plotting these means (see Figure 4) shows that there was no significant difference in leadership potential of men based on conferred status (low status: $M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.63$ vs. high status: $M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.55$; $t[90] = 0.98$, $p = .33$), but for women, the low-status actors incurred a leadership backlash relative to their high-status counterparts (low status: $M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.44$ vs. high status: $M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.22$; $t[85] = 3.21$, $p = .002$). In effect, although high-status men did incur some peer-directed social sanctions, they were still seen as good leaders. Only low-status women suffered potential career penalties for engaging in this resource request. We take these findings as confirmatory evidence for hypothesis 2a that female negotiators without high achieved status are likely to incur social backlash when making requests for resources.

To test hypothesis 2b that evaluators will be less likely to give financial resources in response to requests made by female negotiators without high achieved status, we conducted linear regression with likelihood to issue the full refund as the dependent variable, and gender, status, and the interaction of gender and status as the predictor variables. Consistent with our prediction, the interaction was significant ($F[1, 175] = 3.41$, $p = .02$, $B[SE] = 1.21[0.52]$, $t[175] = 2.32$, $p = .02$). Mean ratings of likelihood to issue the full refund are plotted in Figure 5. Low-status women were less likely to be given the refund relative to women with high achieved status (low-status female target: $M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.70$ vs. high-status female target: $M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.64$; $t[85] = 3.37$, $p = .001$). Further, there was no such difference between responses to the resource requests made by low or high-status men (low-status male target: $M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.61$ vs. high-status male target: $M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.99$; $t[90] = 0.00$, $p = 1.00$). A confirmatory four-way contrast test showed that respondents were least likely to give a refund to a low-status woman relative to all other conditions ($t[175] = 2.83$, $p = .005$).

We next tested our mediated moderation hypotheses (3a and 3b) following the recommendations of Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt (2005). The preceding paragraphs already established the moderation of gender by status on backlash (equation 4 in Muller et al., 2005). We next show the moderation of gender by status on our mediator, legitimacy (equation 5 in Muller et al., 2005). The results presented in Table 4 show a significant interaction effect of gender and status on perceived legitimacy ($B[SE] = 0.70[0.34]$, $t[175] = 2.05$, $p = .04$). The mean values for each condition are plotted in Figure 6. A confirmatory four-way contrast test showed that refund requests made by low-status

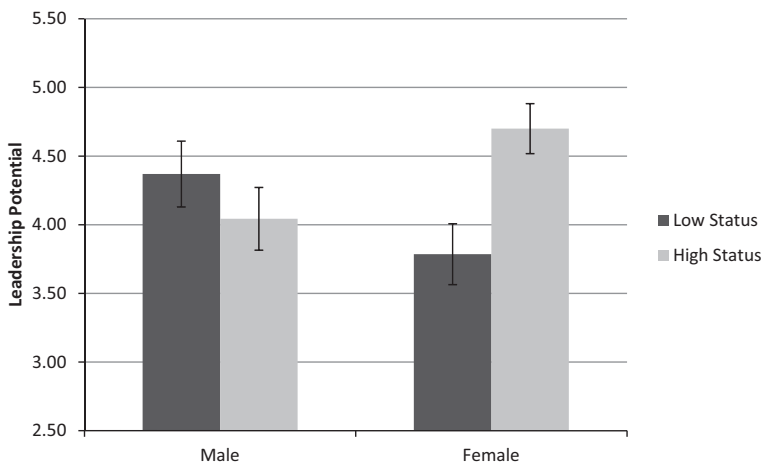


Figure 4. Study 2: Leadership backlash by target gender and organizational status. Bars represent mean refund offers by gender and status; vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

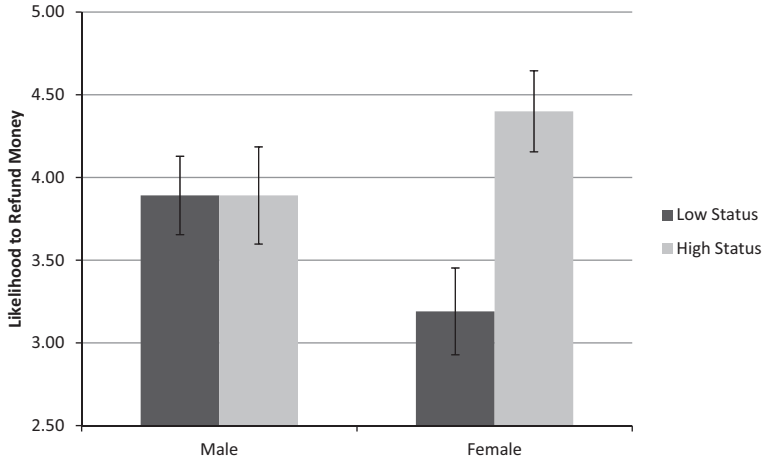


Figure 5. Study 2: Financial backlash by target gender and organizational status. Bars represent mean refund offers by gender and status; vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

Table 4
Study 2: Regression Analyses Testing Main Effects and Interaction of Gender and Status on Perceived Legitimacy

	Main effects			Interaction effect		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Gender	0.05	0.17	.02	-0.31	0.24	-.13
Status	5.29	0.17	.12	-0.05	0.24	-.02
Gender*status				0.70	0.34	.26*
Adjusted R ²			.01			.02

Note. N = 179. Gender is coded as 0 for men and 1 for women; status is coded as 0 for low status and 1 for high status. *p < .05.

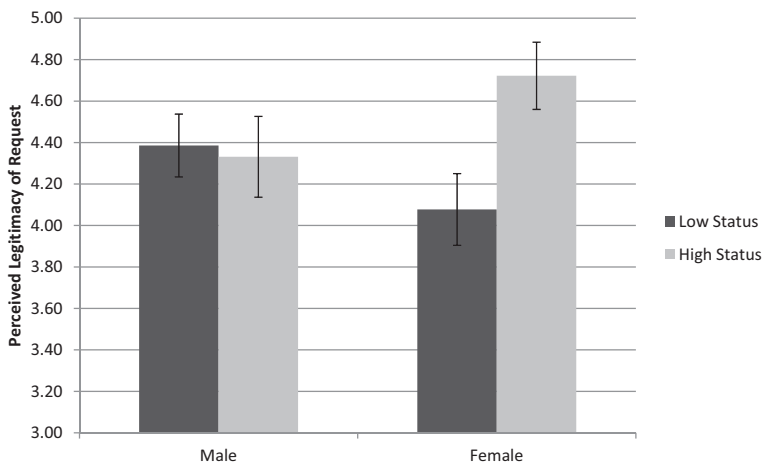


Figure 6. Study 2: Perceived legitimacy of resource request by target gender and organizational status. Bars represent mean refund offers by gender and status; vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

women were seen as less legitimate than all other conditions ($t[175] = 2.00, p = .05$). Thus, resource requests by individuals with neither ascribed status (women) nor achieved status (job title) are perceived as illegitimate.

We next test the final equation (see equation 6 in Muller et al., 2005) to show that legitimacy mediates the moderation of gender by status on backlash. These results are presented in Table 3 and show that legitimacy fully mediated the moderated effect of gender by status on social backlash and financial backlash and partially mediated the effect on leader backlash. We further confirm the indirect effects of the mediator using bootstrapping (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The bootstrap samples yielded the following 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects of legitimacy on social ($-0.90, -0.44$), leader ($0.44, 0.90$), and financial backlash ($0.44, 1.01$). All of these confidence intervals exclude zero and confirm statistical significance of the indirect effects.

Supplemental Analyses

In addition to the above variables, we also measured evaluations of Mark’s and Mary’s competence and warmth. Competence was computed by averaging the ratings on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely* of the resource requestor as *competent*, *intelligent* and *professional* ($M = 4.83, SD = 1.03, \alpha = .76$). Warmth was computed by averaging ratings of *likable* and *agreeable* ($M = 3.49, SD = 1.07, \alpha = .70$). We found a similar significant interaction pattern, with low-status women rated lower than all three other conditions for ratings of competence (see Figure 7) but no such effect for ratings of likability (see Figure 8). Further, competency mediates the effect of gender and status on perceived legitimacy of resource requests, but not vice versa.¹ This finding suggests that when evaluating requests, the evaluator first makes judgments based on the requestor’s status and competence and then uses these personal evaluations to evaluate the legitimacy of the request itself followed by their behavioral response. However, given the cross-sectional single method of measurement used in this study, we take caution not to overstep our ability to make claims of causality or temporality and call on future research to better disentangle this relationship.

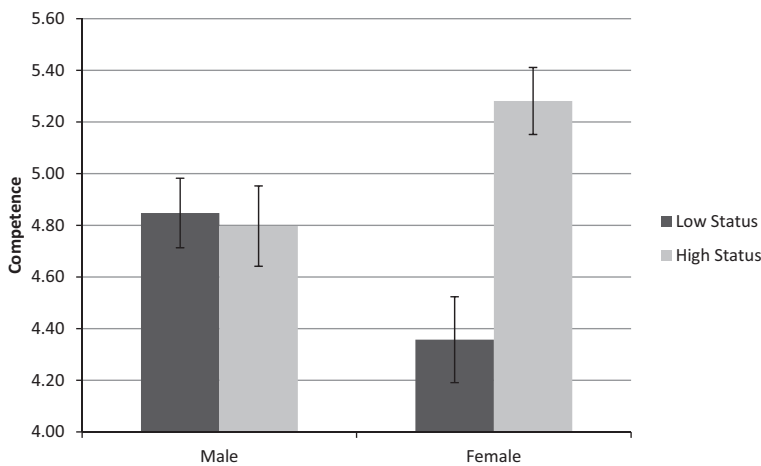


Figure 7. Study 2: Competence by target gender and organizational status. Bars represent mean refund offers by gender and status; vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

¹Details available upon request.

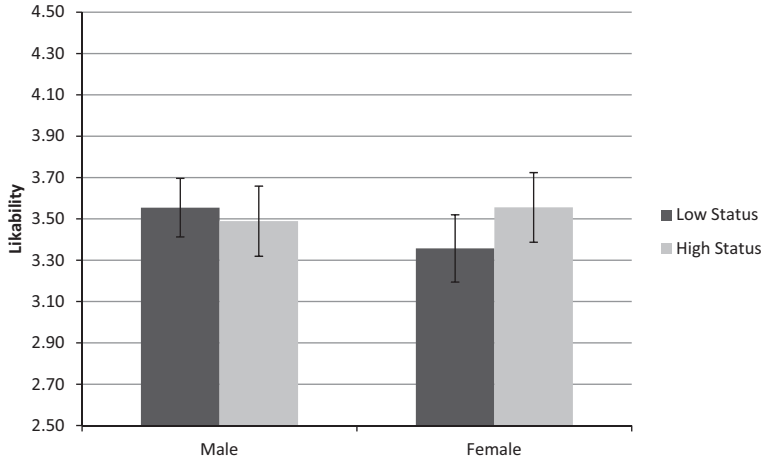


Figure 8. Study 2: Likability by target gender and organizational status. Bars represent mean refund offers by gender and status; vertical lines depict standard errors of the means.

Discussion

The results from this study supported our predictions. To confirm our underlying assumption that gender operates as an ascribed status characteristic, we found that men without externally conferred status based on job position still garnered more social status than equally positioned women. However, when men and women are conferred status through job title, they were perceived equally. This lack of status afforded to women in absence of achieved status resulted in her resource request being perceived as illegitimate, leading to social, leader, and financial backlash. Interestingly, high-status men did incur social sanctions for their behavior; however, this negative evaluation was significantly less consequential for the men as it did not simultaneously translate into career punishment (leader backlash) or reduced access to resources (financial backlash).

General Discussion

The results of two empirical studies provide converging evidence on the nature of backlash toward women based on status. In Study 1, we confirmed our predictions that target gender and achieved status together are important predictors of how respondents react to resource requests. Specifically, respondents were less likely to comply with resource requests made by women who lacked externally conferred status. However, when women have achieved high status as signaled by organizational rank, the requests of women were treated no differently than the resource requests of men. In Study 2, we replicate and extend the findings of Study 1 by showing not only that high achieved status mitigates the likelihood that women will incur financial penalties, but also that they are less likely to incur social sanctions for initiating resource requests and that these different types of backlash are mediated by the perceived legitimacy of the resource request.

Theoretical Implications

At first blush, our research appears inconsistent with prior work on backlash in that we did not find a main effect for gender on either social or financial sanctions (Hypothesis 1). However, that would be a simplified interpretation of our results, which consistently found a moderated effect between gender and achieved status on backlash variables. Contrast tests of this moderation showed that when targets did not

have status via job title then the gender backlash occurred. Our results then are consistent with prior backlash studies and suggest that participants in these prior studies of backlash assumed no ascribed status for their targets.

Given that male and female targets in our high-status conditions were treated similarly, our results offer evidence that the underlying mechanism for differential gender treatment may be the result of perceived status difference between men and women. An interesting question arises as to why achieved status (organizational position) compensates for ascribed (gender) status and whether this outcome might always occur. Results may be confined to negotiations in business domains where achievement is valued more than ascription, and, results may be most apparent when there are large differences in a woman's externally conferred status (between a Junior Officer and an Executive Vice President). A related question for future research is whether absolute status or relative status impacts women's resource requests. For example, would a female Executive Vice President negotiating her compensation with her CEO still enjoy the privileges of achieved status that we found in our results? If so, it suggests that absolute levels of status are more important than relative levels; if not, it suggests the opposite.

Our results also lend support to the claims of gender theorists that women's continuing economic disadvantage can be explained, in part, by the social backlash they experience when they are perceived to be acting unfeminine. When submissive behavior is expected, women who act in ways that may be incongruent with their low gender status (asking for resources) are evaluated more negatively (here, less likable and less of a leader), and this social backlash leads to an economic disadvantage (here, less likely to have the money refunded). Our specific contribution to this gender literature is in linking gender and status, suggesting that feminine is equivalent to "does not have enough status to legitimately claim resources."

The silver lining is that because social and financial backlash depends on gender via ascriptions of status, in some contexts evaluators will be less likely to exhibit backlash toward female targets. We explored achieved status as a contextual moderator because gender is an easily recognizable cue to status, yet this confounding of constructs is often not disentangled in empirical literature. Future research might explore other contexts when expectations of submissiveness lay dormant. We think the important parameters will be contexts that change the perceived nature of the target and contexts that change the nature of the relationship between the evaluator and the target. For example, we identified that status can change the nature of the target. Other research might explore variables that change the nature of the relationship between the evaluator and the target (friendly, hostile, long term, romantic, etc.), which might make it more or less legitimate for women to request resources.

Practical Implications

Our results suggest that climbing the corporate ladder may get easier as women achieve higher status. Much literature demonstrating the backlash effect studies student responses to vignettes involving lower level associates being evaluated by immediate superiors (e.g., Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Perhaps once women have achieved a certain status, they appear to be recategorized and allowed more leeway in their expression of assertive behaviors. Thus, women should search for credible ways to signal their own status at work. The most obvious way to signal that one has status is hierarchical title. Yet there may be other markers one can use, such as a reputation for excellent work (displaying awards), or even subtle signals such as dress (quality tailoring) and physical comportment, and association with other high-status colleagues.

Another practical implication of our research worth noting deals with the nature of our experimental vignette. The resource request embedded in the hotel scenario is one made on behalf of an organization, not for the individuals themselves. There is evidence in prior research that women are motivated to negotiate more assertively (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005) and without incurring social backlash (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013) when doing so on behalf of others.

However, we found that despite the fact that the resource request was actually for one's company, low-status women still incurred backlash. We suspect that in our scenario other advocacy was not particularly salient to evaluators. The protagonist in our scenario had mistakenly overbooked rooms, and participants may have interpreted the protagonist's refund request as simply trying to salvage his or her own reputation within the firm. Thus, women who may be negotiating on behalf of their organization should quite explicitly signal this other advocacy to their counterparts to reap the benefits found in other research.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The limits of this research simultaneously suggest interesting directions for future inquiry. We used an experimental design, which allowed for a great measure of control but may have omitted important workplace considerations. Although it was appropriate for gathering evidence to test our specific hypotheses, it would be fruitful for future research to observe the likelihood and nature of backlash in more naturalistic negotiations with behavioral outcome measures. We would expect reactions to be even more extreme when assertive behavior, like a refund request counter to hotel policy, is actively experienced rather than passively read in a vignette.

Our experimental design poses other limitations. For example, we assumed asking for a refund would be perceived as an assertive behavior, but we did not directly measure this perception. We chose not to ask this question because we were wary about respondents' abilities to answer in a gender-neutral way. That is, if gender stereotypes were already activated (by reading the vignette), it is likely respondents would rate the behavior as more assertive for women and less assertive for men. Hence, this measure would then be confounded with our measures of legitimacy, competency, and social backlash. Another assumption we made was that the propriety of asking for the refund was ambiguous. Again, we felt it would be difficult for respondents to answer questions about the norms for the appropriateness of this behavior in gender-neutral ways. Hence, we followed prior research protocols (c.f. Bowles et al., 2007) and assumed ambiguous impropriety. We might argue that had this type of behavior not been perceived as assertive in an ambiguous context, we would not have observed gender-biased results. Nonetheless, future research should address these implicit assumptions.

Conclusion

Women may still be disadvantaged in workplace negotiations due to the incongruity between assertive behaviors necessary to be successful and expectations based on what is appropriate for each gender. However, in our research, we have shown that expectations of female submissiveness may be rooted in the ascribed status differences associated with gender. Thus, achieved status can moderate the legitimacy of resource-seeking behaviors for women such that women with high achieved status are liberated to ask for resources without incurring either social or financial punishment.

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Appendix 1

Chris is a newly hired Junior Officer in Human Resources still learning about event planning for her [his] firm [the Executive Vice President for Human Resources with a long history of success at her [his] firm], which is a medium-sized, private organization. For their annual overnight retreat, she [he] booked reservations for the 32 managers at a popular downtown hotel. The reservation is for 32 rooms at \$100 each for one night (for a total of \$3,200).

You are the manager for this popular hotel and it is your hotel's well-posted policy that cancellations must be made 48 hr in advance or the customer will be charged the full fare for the room. Chris learned within 24 hr of the retreat that five managers for her [his] company will not be attending. Given that the 48 hr grace period has passed, your hotel will be charging her [him] for all 32 rooms (i.e., including \$500 for the five "no show" managers).

Chris has asked you for a \$500 refund for the unused rooms.

Appendix 2

Mark[Mary] is a newly hired Junior Officer in Human Resources [the Executive Vice President for Human Resources] at his[her] firm, which is a medium-sized, private organization. For their annual overnight retreat, Mark[Mary] booked reservations for the 32 managers at a popular downtown hotel. The reservation is for 32 rooms at \$100 each for one night (for a total of \$3,200).

You are the manager for this popular hotel and it is your hotel's well-posted policy that cancellations must be made 48 hr in advance or the customer will be charged the full fare for the room. Mark[Mary] notified you within only 24 hr of the retreat that five managers for his[her] company will not be attending. Given that the 48 hr grace period has passed, your hotel will be charging him[her] for all 32 rooms (i.e., including \$500 for the five "no show" managers).

Mark[Mary] has asked you for a \$500 refund for the unused rooms. Here is how the negotiation proceeds:

Mark[Mary] : "We have had some last minute cancellations and will only need 27 rooms rather than the full 32 originally blocked."

You : "Unfortunately the hotel requires cancellations be made at least 48 hr in advance and I will have to charge you the full amount that we agreed upon for the 32 rooms."

Mark[Mary] : (In a challenging tone) "I understand that may be your policy for general guests at the hotel, but I am bringing you a lot of business with my firm's retreat and feel my situation should be given special consideration."

As the manager, you have the power to enforce hotel policy or grant a reprieve at your discretion.

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