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The mitigating effect of desiring status on social backlash against ambitious women[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Power-seeking women incur social penalties known as backlash, yet research has identified two motive bases for leadership: power and status. Across five studies ($N = 1683$) using samples of working professionals, MBA students, undergraduates, and online participants, we investigate perceptions of individuals with varying motives for power and status. We uncover the motive for status is more congruent with feminine stereotypes compared to the power motive (Study 1), and that women who desire status are less likely to incur backlash compared to women who desire power (Study 2). We find that women who desire power appear to have greater perceived leadership potential compared to women who desire only status. However, women who desire *both* power and status benefit, as they are perceived as highly leaderlike but incur less backlash than women who only desire power (Study 3). We detect support for the novel “Status Compensation Effect” in experimental (Studies 1–3) and naturalistic settings (Studies 4–5), such that the negative social consequences typically incurred by power-seeking women (i.e., backlash) are reduced for women who simultaneously desire status. The current research highlights how women’s desires for power and status serve competing functions in impacting their likelihood of incurring backlash.

“To succeed, she needs to be liked, but to be liked, she needs to temper her success.”

–Ann Friedman on Hillary Clinton (Friedman, 2012)

There was a time in U.S. history when Hillary Rodham Clinton was the most popular politician in the country (O’Connor, 2013). However, between the years 2013 and 2016, she became one of the most unlikable women in America (e.g., Erichsen, Schrock, Dowd-Arrow, & Dignam, 2020; Rogan, 2016). What changed in those three years during her campaign for President? One possible explanation is that she was a woman caught in the act of desiring power. An analysis of Clinton’s approval ratings show that each time Clinton declared a run for office, her approval ratings plummeted (Silver, 2012), revealing a prejudice against her desire for power. This issue is not unique to Hillary Clinton. In fact, empirical evidence shows that power-seeking women face more negative social consequences, known as social backlash, compared to power-seeking men (Brescoll, Okimoto, & Vial, 2018; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; Phelan & Rudman, 2010), as the mere act of desiring power violates prescriptive gender stereotypes, which stipulate that women

should be warm, other-oriented, and caring (i.e., communal) while men should be ambitious, assertive, and competitive (i.e., agentic; Eagly, Nater, Miller, Kaufmann, & Sczesny, 2020; Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Sczesny, Nater, & Eagly, 2018). However, given that most modern workplaces especially value masculine traits (Cheryan & Markus, 2020), women are required to present themselves as counter-stereotypical to ascend organizational hierarchies.

Research has identified two means of ascending hierarchies: power, or possessing control over valued resources, and status, or being respected in the eyes of others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). While backlash against power-seeking women has been well-documented, reactions to women who desire status, either in the absence of power, or alongside power, remain unknown. In the present research, we address whether the “Catch-22” (i.e., a dilemma arising from mutually conflicting or dependent conditions) that characterizes power-seeking women also holds for status-seeking women. Although both power-seeking and status-seeking are means of ascending social hierarchies, we propose that the desire for status is more congruent with prescribed feminine stereotypes compared to the desire for power. While previous research

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has linked preferences for status to the communal motive of desiring support from others (Locke, 2015; Locke & Heller, 2017), research has yet to directly examine whether perceivers view status as more congruent with feminine stereotypes compared to power. Additionally, given that backlash is typically directed towards gender-norm-violators, we propose that women who desire status will incur less backlash than women who desire power. Further, since desires for power have been linked to greater perceived leadership potential (Rudman, Greenwald, & McGhee, 2001; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000; Schein, Mueller, Lituchy, & Liu, 1996), we propose that women who simultaneously desire power and status will have the greatest likelihood of minimizing backlash while still being seen as having greater leadership potential than women who desire status but not power.

In the current research, we provide several theoretical and empirical contributions to the literatures on gender, social hierarchy, and leadership. First, we tease apart the desires for power and status to identify their independent roles in eliciting social backlash (i.e., reduced likability, reduced willingness to work with) from observers. Second, acknowledging women's "Catch-22," we note that although the desire for status may help women minimize backlash, the desire for power may still be necessary to convey perceived leadership, given that masculine traits such as power and power-seeking are associated with perceived leadership (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Schein et al., 1996). As such, we investigate whether desires for both power and status, in combination, provide an effective means for women to climb social hierarchies; that is, to appear leaderlike without increasing their likelihood of incurring social penalties. Finally, given that individuals can simultaneously possess desires for power and status to varying degrees (Scott & Cohen, 2020; Sheldon & Cooper, 2008), we investigate the interactive relationship between women's desires for power and status to determine whether the desire for status moderates power-seeking women's likelihood of incurring backlash, both from the aspect of evaluators and from first-hand reports of experienced backlash. Taken together, we shed light on how motives for the two bases of social hierarchy differentially impact impressions of men and women.

1. Gender stereotypes and backlash against norm violators

When female managers were interviewed about the barriers they faced while ascending the corporate ladder, many described the consequences of gender stereotypes (Peus, Braun, & Knipfer, 2015). Rule-based gender stereotypes are both prescriptive and proscriptive in nature, as they dictate how men and women *should and should not* behave. Accordingly, Prentice and Carranza (2002) presented a four-category framework of stereotypes that were either congruent or incongruent with gender roles and spanned from being desirable to undesirable in nature. They found that societal standards dictate that men and women should exhibit desirable traits that are aligned with their gender roles, known as intensified prescriptions (e.g., women should be friendly, men should be assertive), but they *should not* exhibit undesirable traits that are incongruent with their gender roles, known as intensified proscriptions (e.g., women should not be arrogant, men should not be emotional). On the other hand, they found that traits which were undesirable but aligned with gender stereotypes (e.g., women are yielding, men are controlling) are considered relaxed proscriptions, as in they are tolerated for men and women even though the traits themselves are undesirable. In summary, society's rule-based gender stereotypes stipulate that both men and women have social latitude to behave in ways that are either desirable or undesirable, as long as their behavior is in alignment with their respective gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes are socially reinforced to maintain the existing gender hierarchy, such that women are penalized for displaying masculinity (e.g., Yildirim, Kocapinar, & Ecevit, 2021) while men are penalized for displaying femininity (Bosak, Kulich, Rudman, & Kinahan, 2018; Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010), ultimately keeping women subordinate to men. As such, when women exhibit dominant

masculine traits deemed central to professional success, they threaten the gender hierarchy and risk incurring backlash (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Glick, & Phelan, 2012). The incongruence between women's prescribed gender stereotypes and the attributes considered necessary for professional success leaves women in a double bind. If women behave in stereotypically feminine ways, they are seen as lacking necessary leadership qualities, risking professional advancement (Heilman, 2012). Conversely, if women display agentic qualities, causing them to deviate from feminine norms, they are met with backlash (e.g., Rudman, 1998; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). Evidence that women who desire power incur backlash raises the question of how women might possess desires to ascend hierarchies without suffering backlash.

2. Power and status as bases for ascending social hierarchies

Existing research has identified two methods of hierarchical ascension: power, defined as control over resources, and status, defined as respect in the eyes of others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Although the possession of power or status can differently impact the behavior of their holders (e.g., Blader & Chen, 2012; Blader, Shirako, & Chen, 2016), power and status often covary in organizational hierarchies, such that possessing control over valuable resources can lead to being respected and vice versa (Kilduff & Galinsky, 2013; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). As such, one can argue that possessing desires for either power or status can ultimately amount to similar levels of ascendancy in organizational hierarchies.

However, extant research on backlash against ambitious women has examined perceptions of women who are high in both power and status, rather than disentangling the two concepts. For instance, research finds that women seeking political office (i.e., a position that entails both power and status) are considered less likable by voters (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010), female managers are considered less rational than their male counterparts (Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995), and female professors in high status departments (e.g., engineering) are evaluated more negatively than female professors in low status departments (e.g., history) (Fisher, Stinson, & Kalajdzic, 2019). Thus, it is presently unclear whether the documented effects of backlash are driven by women's desires for power, status, or a combination of both. Moreover, evidence finds that penalties for ambitious women may differ depending on whether they are pursuing leadership, as opposed to already occupying positions of leadership (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Taken with the fact that extant research conflates power and status, it is presently unclear how perceptions of women differ whether they are already occupying positions of power and/or status, or seeking power and/or status. Without disentangling how power and status independently and interactively influence women's likelihood of incurring backlash, our understanding of backlash against gender-norm-violating women remains theoretically and empirically distorted.

We posit that the desire for status is more gender-congruent for women than the desire for power. Status, by definition, is conferred upon by others, making holders reliant on others to maintain their standing, thereby engendering communion (Locke, 2015; Locke & Heller, 2017). In other words, one can have status only when others confer it (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962). Therefore, those seeking to attain or maintain status are required to pay attention to others who may or may not confer status (Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006). By contrast, power elicits agency by liberating its holders to act on their own goals and interests (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). Illustrating the distinction between power and status, research finds that high-status holders are more likely to distribute resources fairly compared to high-power holders (Blader & Chen, 2012), as engaging in fair decision-making is a strategy through which high-status holders ensure that others regard them as respectable. As such, both status and power entail agency, but only status entails communion and is thus more aligned with feminine stereotypes. Lending support to this assertion,

prior research has found that women tend to prefer status over power (Hays, 2013) and that desires for status have been linked to communal motives (Locke & Heller, 2017). However, research has yet to examine whether perceivers consider the desire for status to be more aligned with the construct of femininity than the desire for power. Given that the desire for status, compared to power, is a more communal means of ascending the social hierarchy as it relies on the conferral of respect from others, and that women are prescribed communal stereotypes while men are prescribed agentic stereotypes, we predict that the desire for status is more aligned with prescribed feminine stereotypes than the desire for power.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). The desire for status will be more congruent with prescribed feminine stereotypes compared to the desire for power.

We note that the construct of status may appear to have overlap with the construct of likability, which some might argue could be the primary driver in enabling women to ascend the social hierarchy while minimizing their chances of incurring backlash. However, research has found status and social belonging (i.e., likability) to be conceptually distinct (Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland, 2015). Interpersonal relationships are organized along both a “horizontal” affiliative dimension and a “vertical” dimension that addresses dominance, power, and status (Bakan, 1966; Foa & Foa, 1974; Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005; Wiggins, Trapnell, & Phillips, 1988). By definition, status involves placing an individual above oneself through the means of respect (Blau, 1964), whereas likability is a horizontal construct involving desire for affiliation and communal sharing norms (Riley & Fiske, 1991). The basis for which one attains status is distinct from the basis for attaining social belonging (Godfrey, Jones, & Lord, 1986; Powers & Zuroff, 1988), as high status is earned from judgments of competence and expertise (Magee & Galinsky, 2008) whereas likability can operate independently of judgments of competence and expertise (e.g., an individual can be considered likable without being considered competent and vice versa). As such, one cannot ascend a social hierarchy based on likability alone. Moreover, although being well-liked may allow women to minimize backlash, we propose that the desire for status, independent of likability, has the potential to minimize women’s likelihood of incurring backlash.

3. The status compensation effect

Given research finds that backlash is directed towards individuals who violate gender stereotypes (e.g., Moss-Racusin et al., 2010; Rudman, 1998; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Glick, & Phelan, 2012), and that the desire for status may be more gender-congruent for women compared to the desire for power, we posit that women who desire status will have a reduced likelihood of incurring backlash compared to women who desire only power. However, as stated previously, both power and status entail agency, given that desires for either power or status convey intentions to ascend hierarchies, deviating from prescribed feminine stereotypes. As such, we posit that the desire for status, due to its communal nature, will *minimize* women’s likelihood of incurring backlash, rather than eliminate that likelihood altogether.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Women, to a greater extent than men, will incur less backlash when they desire status as opposed to power.

Prior research suggests that the desire for power conveys masculinity, given that power and power-seeking are closely tied to the constructs of agency, which is central to the theme of masculinity (Rudman et al., 2001; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000; Sczesny et al., 2018). However, as suggested previously, the desire for status conveys both masculinity and femininity, in that it is a desire to ascend the social hierarchy (i.e., aligning with agency), but also relies on others to confer status (i.e., aligning with communality). As such, we posit that the desire for status will serve competing functions in impacting women’s likelihood of incurring backlash, which will vary based on the extent to which women simultaneously desire power. For instance, if a woman has a low desire

for power, then a higher desire for status will lead her to be seen as gender-role-incongruent, eliciting backlash, as the desire for status (in the absence of a desire for power), conveys masculinity. However, if a woman has a high desire for power, then a high desire for status will allow her to be seen as more gender-role-congruent, as the masculinity conveyed by her desire for power will be tempered by the femininity conveyed by her desire for status.

Thus, we postulate that women’s desire for status may bring perceptual benefits in that it allows women to appear more gender-role congruent even when they possess high desires for power, a phenomenon we termed the *Status Compensation Effect*. In other words, women’s desire for status will moderate the extent to which their desire for power elicits backlash. For instance, if women possess a high power motive but a low status motive, they will be more likely to incur backlash, as suggested by existing research on backlash against power-seeking women. However, if women possess a high power motive but also a high status motive, they will be comparatively less likely to incur backlash. As such, we posit that desires for power and status will interact to influence impressions of women. Conversely, we do not expect men’s desires for power or status to interact to influence impressions of men, as both power and status convey agency and are thus aligned with masculine stereotypes.

Hypotheses 3A (H3A). For women, their desire for status will moderate the extent to which their desire for power elicits backlash, such that women who desire both power and status will incur less backlash than women who desire power but not status.

Hypothesis 3B (H3B). For men, their desire for status will not moderate the extent to which their desire for power elicits backlash, as both desires are aligned with masculine norms.

While we assert that the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect may allow power-seeking women to mitigate their likelihood of incurring backlash by possessing a high status motive, we acknowledge that the desire for status alone may not be enough for women to be perceived as fit for leadership. Historically, masculine traits have been considered central to perceptions of leadership (Koenig et al., 2011; Schein et al., 1996). Additionally, given that power and power-seeking are central to the constructs of agency and masculinity (Rudman et al., 2001; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000), the desire for power may be necessary to increase women’s perceived fit for leadership. As such, we expect that women’s desire for power will positively influence the extent to which they are perceived as leaderlike, which on its own, leaves women in a double bind such that their perceived leadership abilities come at the risk of incurring social backlash. However, we expect that women who desire both power and status will appear similarly leaderlike compared to women who desire only power, but incur less backlash than women who desire only power, suggesting that women may balance their desires for power with desires for status to minimize their likelihood of incurring backlash while also appearing leaderlike.

4. Overview of studies

We test our hypotheses on a variety of samples (working professionals, MBA students, undergraduate students, online participants) and employ a multi-method approach consisting of experiments, vignettes, correlational evidence, and a field study featuring face-to-face interactions. In Study 1, we test whether the desire for status is more congruent with prescribed feminine stereotypes compared to the desire for power (H1) by comparing impressions of gender-ambiguous targets who either have a high power motive or high status motive. In Study 2, we examine the independent effects of the power motive and status motive and test whether women, to a greater extent than men, incur less backlash when they desire status as opposed to power (H2). In Study 3, we test the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect by examining the interactive relationship between the women’s power motives and status

motives. We manipulate female targets' desires for power and status to test whether women who desire *both* power and status incur less backlash than women who desire only power (H3A), but are perceived as more leaderlike compared to women who desire only status. In Study 4, we moved beyond hypothetical experiments to understand whether support for the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect appeared in an externally valid setting by examining MBA students' impressions of their classmates in an interview context, such that self-reported power motives and status motives interacted to influence backlash for women (H3A) but not for men (H3B). Specifically, we conduct exploratory analysis to examine whether women's status motives moderate the extent to which their higher power motives predict greater social backlash, such that women's higher power motives will be associated with greater backlash when their status motives are low, but not when their status motives are high. Finally, in Study 5, we sought to conduct a confirmatory test of the Status Compensation Effect by examining whether participants' power motives and status motives interacted to influence firsthand recall of backlash for women (H3A), but not for men (H3B).

Throughout the studies, we focus on targets who desire power and/or status, rather than targets who already possess high power or high status, as research suggests that penalties for ambitious women may differ depending on whether they are pursuing leadership, as opposed to already occupying positions of leadership (Rosette & Tost, 2010). For all experiments, we aimed to recruit at least 50 participants per condition to fulfill minimum cell-size requirements (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011). We report all recruited participants and all conditions.¹

5. Study 1

In Study 1, we sought to establish whether the desire for status (as opposed to power) is indeed more congruent with feminine stereotypes (Hypothesis 1). This study was pre-registered (pre-registration: https://aspredicted.org/Y2G_V25).

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and design

We recruited 203 participants (51% women, $M_{age} = 30$ years, $SD_{age} = 9$ years) from Prolific in a 2-cell (motive: power-seeking or status-seeking) between-subject design. A post-hoc sensitivity analysis revealed that this sample size provided 80% power to detect an effect size of $f = 0.12$. No participants were excluded from the analysis.

5.1.2. Procedure

Upon entering the survey, participants read about a hypothetical target named J.L. who was depicted as desiring either high power or high status. We intentionally used initials to describe the target to minimize the extent to which perceived target gender impacted impressions of the target. For the power-seeking target, participants read that J.L. wants a great deal of power, wants control over valuable resources, wants the ability to get people to listen to what J.L. says, wants the ability to get others to do what J.L. wants, and wants decision-making power. For the status-seeking target, participants read that J.L. wants a great deal of status, wants to be respected by others, wants to be admired by others, wants to have high social standing, and wants others to look up to them. The stimuli descriptions were derived from the definitions of power and status as detailed by Magee and Galinsky (2008).

¹ For data for studies, survey materials, code, and additional analysis for measures not reported in the main text, please refer to the online supplement (<https://osf.io/5gy6a>).

5.1.3. Prescriptive and proscriptive stereotypes

After reading about J.L., participants indicated the extent to which J.L. could be characterized by fifteen prescriptive feminine stereotypes (e.g., warm, kind; $\alpha = 0.94$), eight proscriptive feminine stereotypes (e.g., rebellious, arrogant; $\alpha = 0.81$), fifteen prescriptive masculine stereotypes (e.g., assertive, decisive; $\alpha = 0.88$), and eleven proscriptive masculine stereotypes (e.g., shy, moody; $\alpha = 0.81$). For the full list of items that comprised each composite variable, please see the Supplemental Materials. The items were drawn from work by Prentice and Carranza (2002) and were rated on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely) Likert scale. Given Prentice and Carranza (2002) had only listed 6 proscribed feminine stereotypes, we added the terms "pushy" and "demanding" to increase the reliability of the measure.

We elected to use Prentice and Carranza's (2002) items as their feminine proscriptive stereotypes have previously been utilized in backlash research to measure women's dominance penalty, or behaviors that are proscribed against women while reserved for leaders and men (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). Additionally, Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, and Nauts (2012) states that agentic women are "demonized" to subordinate them and protect the gender hierarchy. As such, feminine proscriptive stereotypes are the primary variables of interest, given that they capture women's dominance penalty (i.e., a form of social backlash). However, we initially examine all four categories of gender rules to establish that the status motive is more fulfilling of feminine stereotypes than the power motive, as high ratings in one category (e.g., feminine proscriptive stereotypes) should be accompanied by low ratings on the opposing category (e.g., feminine prescriptive stereotypes). After establishing this upfront, subsequent studies will primarily be concerned with how women's motives for power and status influence their perceived fulfillment of feminine proscriptive stereotypes, or social backlash in the form of a dominance penalty.

5.1.4. Manipulation check

Participants indicated the extent to which J.L. was described as desiring power or status on a 1 (definitely power) to 7 (definitely status) bipolar Likert scale where lower scores corresponded with desires for power and higher scores corresponded with desires for status.

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Analytic approach

As pre-registered, we conducted two-way mixed ANOVAs to test whether the desire for status (as opposed to the desire for power) is more gender-role congruent for women. Motive (power-seeking or status-seeking) served as the between-subject factor and gender stereotypes (masculine or feminine) served as the within-subject factor on each type of stereotype (i.e., prescriptive and proscriptive).

5.2.1.1. Manipulation check. Participants in the power-seeking condition provided lower ratings ($M = 2.05$; $SD = 1.95$) than participants in the status-seeking condition ($M = 5.15$; $SD = 2.26$), $t(201) = -10.46$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.47$. Thus, the manipulation was successful, as power-seeking targets were perceived to desire more power than status while status-seeking targets were perceived to desire more status than power.

5.2.1.2. Prescriptive stereotypes. A main effect of gender stereotype emerged, as both power-seeking and status-seeking targets were perceived to fulfill masculine prescriptive stereotypes (e.g., assertive, decisive) ($M = 5.22$; $SD = 0.87$) more than feminine prescriptive stereotypes (e.g., warm, kind) ($M = 3.76$; $SD = 1.15$), $F(1,201) = 333.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.624$. Both power-seeking and status-seeking convey more masculinity than femininity. Additionally, a main effect of motive indicated that the status-seeking target ($M = 4.60$; $SD = 0.79$) fulfilled prescriptive stereotypes more than the power-seeking target ($M = 4.38$; $SD = 0.74$), $F(1,201) = 4.39$, $p = .037$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.021$. This effect suggests

that status-seeking may generally be viewed more positively than power-seeking. As shown in Fig. 1, a significant interaction between motive and gender stereotypes emerged, $F(1,201) = 65.54, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.246$. Supporting Hypothesis 1, the status-seeking target was rated higher on feminine prescriptive stereotypes (e.g., warm, kind) ($M = 4.19; SD = 0.96$) compared to the power-seeking target ($M = 3.31; SD = 1.15$), $t(201) = 5.90, p < .001, d = 0.83$. By contrast, for prescriptive masculine stereotypes (e.g., assertive, decisive), the power-seeking target was rated higher ($M = 5.44; SD = 0.71$) than the status-seeking target ($M = 5.01; SD = 0.95$), $t(201) = 3.63, p < .001, d = 0.51$.

5.2.1.3. Proscriptive stereotypes. A main effect of gender stereotype emerged, as power-seeking and status-seeking targets were rated higher on feminine proscriptive stereotypes (e.g., rebellious, arrogant) ($M = 4.93; SD = 0.97$) compared to masculine proscriptive stereotypes (e.g., shy, moody) ($M = 3.72; SD = 0.92$), $F(1,201) = 285.64, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.587$. In other words, both power-seeking and status-seeking targets violated feminine norms more than masculine norms. Additionally, a main effect of motive indicated that the status-seeking target violated stereotypes ($M = 4.15; SD = 0.74$) less than the power-seeking target ($M = 4.51; SD = 0.63$), $F(1,201) = 14.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.066$. A significant interaction between motive and gender stereotypes emerged, $F(1,201) = 94.09, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.319$. Further supporting Hypothesis 1, as shown in Fig. 1, the status-seeking target was rated lower on feminine proscriptive stereotypes ($M = 4.41; SD = 0.97$) compared to the high-power target ($M = 5.47; SD = 0.60$), $t(201) = 9.32, p < .001, d = 1.31$. This effect suggests that status-seeking is in lesser violation of feminine stereotypes compared to power-seeking. For proscriptive masculine stereotypes, the high-power target was rated lower ($M = 3.55; SD = 0.96$) than the high-status target ($M = 3.89; SD = 0.85$), $t(201) = 2.64, p = .009, d = 0.43$.

5.3. Discussion

To our knowledge, Study 1 is the first to explore how motives for the two bases of social hierarchy influence perceived gender conformity. Supporting Hypothesis 1, we find that compared to power, the desire for status is perceived to fulfill feminine prescriptive stereotypes (e.g., warm, kind) and to avoid violating feminine proscriptive stereotypes (e.g., rebellious, arrogant) to a greater extent than desire for power. The desire for power, on the other hand, is perceived to fulfill masculine prescriptive stereotypes (e.g., assertive, decisive) and to avoid violating masculine proscriptive stereotypes (e.g., shy, moody) to a greater extent

than desire for status. Taken together, this evidence suggests that, overall, status-seeking is more consistent with general feminine norms and power-seeking is more consistent with general masculine norms.

However, we also found that both desires for power and status are more aligned with prescriptive masculine stereotypes than prescriptive feminine stereotypes, which suggests that desires for both bases of social hierarchy convey a degree of dominance consistent with masculine norms. We posit that the positive perceptions of status, specifically its congruence with feminine norms, will aid ambitious women in minimizing their likelihood of incurring backlash. In Study 2, we set out to measure social backlash (e.g., the extent to which an individual is disliked) to test whether perceivers considered women who desired status as less likely to incur backlash compared to those who desired power.

6. Study 2

Given that gender-norm-violators are at an increased risk of incurring backlash, and that status is more congruent with feminine norms compared to power, in Study 2, participants evaluated male and female targets to test whether women, to a greater extent than men, were considered less susceptible to backlash when they desired status versus power (Hypothesis 2). This study was not pre-registered.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Participants and design

Two hundred forty-three undergraduate students (50% women, $M_{age} = 21$ years, $SD_{age} = 2$ years) from a highly-selective public West Coast university participated in exchange for course credit. The online study had a 2 (target gender: male or female) \times 2 (desire: status or power) entirely between-subject design. A post-hoc sensitivity analysis revealed that this sample size provided 80% power to detect an effect size of $f = 0.18$.

6.1.2. Procedure

Participants were informed that employers use personality assessments to gauge whether candidates are suited for a given job. Participants were then randomly assigned to view a male or female job candidate's (target) profile which contained the candidate's name (Alice Miller or William Miller), gender (man or woman), age (27), hometown (Albany, NY), and educational institution (Pennsylvania State University), the latter three of which were held constant across conditions. The candidate profiles also contained ostensive results of a personality

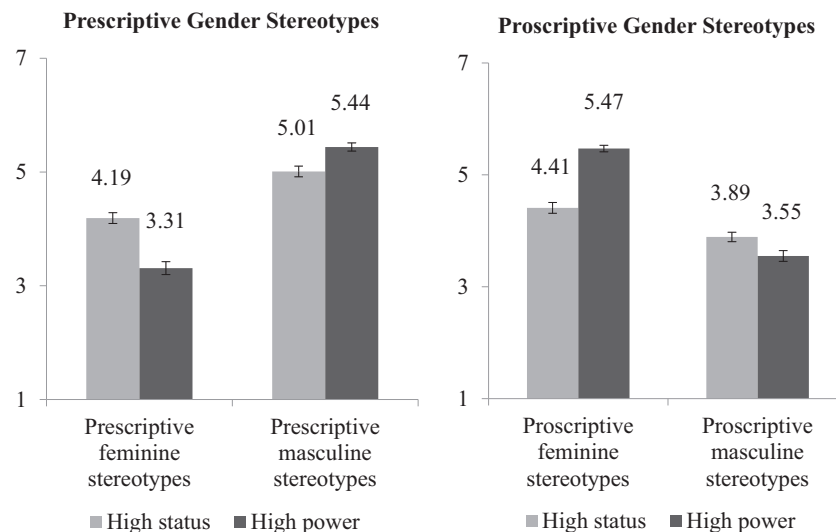


Fig. 1. Conformity to prescriptive and proscriptive gender stereotypes for gender-neutral targets possessing either high status or high power in Study 1.

assessment gauging the target's underlying desires, which depicted targets as either possessing a high desire for power or a high desire for status.

The personality assessment results displayed the target's percentile rankings on four underlying desires (status, power, security, and basic physical needs) compared to others who took the personality assessment. Given that participants might not be readily familiar with the academic definitions of power and status, we showed participants definitions of each desire, drawing the definitions of power and status from Magee and Galinsky (2008). Please see Supplemental Materials for the stimuli. In the power-seeking condition, the target scored in the 96th percentile for desire for power, in the 54th percentile for desire for basic physical needs, in the 48th percentile for security, and in the 13th percentile for social status. The status-seeking condition was similar except the target scored in the 96th percentile for social status and in the 13th percentile for power.

6.1.3. Social backlash

Participants rated the extent to which the target would be susceptible to backlash, measured using an adapted version of the 11-item Fear of Backlash inventory (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). To discourage participants from providing socially desirable responses, our items were adapted to measure the extent to which participants believed others would inflict backlash towards the target (e.g., "Do you worry that your subordinate will think you are too assertive?" was adapted to "Others will think Miller is too assertive"). Additionally, given evidence of audience-based gender-bias where evaluators discriminate against women because they believe others will do the same (e.g., Abraham, 2020; Becker, 1971; Fernandez-Mateo & King, 2011), we maintain that our items are a valid measure of the backlash a target might incur. We eliminated 4 items because they either did not fit the context (e.g., "Do you feel embarrassed to be a boss?") or they alluded to the fact that this study was concerned with gender (e.g., "Do you worry that someone of your gender should not be self-promoting?"). One item was inadvertently omitted from the measure ("Would you worry about being labeled negatively?"). The remaining 6 items were combined ($\alpha = 0.90$). All items were measured on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely) Likert scale.

6.1.4. Manipulation check

Participants completed two manipulation checks in which they indicated the target's gender and highest scoring underlying desire.

6.2. Results

6.2.1. Analytic approach

Upon initial analyses, we found that including participant gender as a factor did not significantly impact our findings. As such, all results are reported without considering participants' gender. We conducted a two-way analysis of variances (ANOVA) with target gender and desire serving as our between-subject factors.

6.2.1.1. Manipulation check. Most participants correctly indicated the target's gender (96%) and the highest scoring underlying desire (95%). All results are reported including responses that failed manipulation checks, as our pattern of results hold constant whether or not those responses are excluded.

6.2.1.2. Social backlash. A main effect for desire indicated that targets desiring status ($M = 3.55$; $SD = 1.27$) were less susceptible to backlash compared to targets desiring power ($M = 5.19$; $SD = 1.03$), $F(1,239) = 129.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.351$. A main effect of target gender indicated that female targets were less likely to receive backlash from others ($M = 4.11$; $SD = 1.57$) compared to male targets ($M = 4.64$; $SD = 1.19$), which is understandable given that our measure was adapted from a scale originally measuring the extent to which women worried they appeared

masculine, $F(1,239) = 12.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.048$. Supporting Hypothesis 2, a significant interaction between target gender and desire emerged (see Fig. 2), $F(1,239) = 5.77$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.024$. The female target desiring status was significantly less likely to incur backlash ($M = 3.13$; $SD = 1.24$) compared to the female target who desired power ($M = 5.11$; $SD = 1.20$), $t(239) = -9.76$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.62$. The male target who desired status ($M = 3.98$; $SD = 1.16$) was also less likely to incur social penalties compared to the male target who desired power ($M = 5.27$; $SD = 0.83$), $t(239) = -6.32$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.28$, but to a lesser extent compared to female targets.

6.3. Discussion

Study 2 provides evidence suggesting that women, to a greater extent than men, will incur less social backlash when they appear to desire status as opposed to power, supporting Hypothesis 2. While Study 1 established that status was more congruent with feminine stereotypes when held by a gender-ambiguous target, Study 2 suggests that target gender influences these perceptions, such that a status-seeking woman is viewed as more gender-congruent than a power-seeking woman and thus less likely to incur backlash. In Study 2, we found that power-seeking targets were generally perceived more negatively than status-seeking targets. This is consistent with our findings from Study 1 which showed that power was overall more aligned with the violation of prescriptive stereotypes (i.e., was rated more negatively) while status was more aligned with the fulfillment of prescriptive stereotypes.

In Study 2, we also found that men were considered more susceptible to social backlash than women. However, the measure was adapted from the Fear of Backlash scale (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004), which was originally designed to measure the extent to which women worry that they might be perceived as violating traditional feminine gender norms. Therefore, it is understandable that men were rated higher on these items, as many items measure conformity to traditionally masculine gender norms. Relatedly, although power-seeking men might overall appear less likable than status-seeking men, research finds that likability is less central to men's professional success than it is for women (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Carli, LaFleur, & Loeber, 1995; Rudman, 1998).

A limitation of the present study is that we examined artificially constrained targets to be high in one motive and low in the other, whereas in reality, individuals may possess multiple motives (Scott & Cohen, 2020; Sheldon & Cooper, 2008), even possessing high motives for power and status simultaneously, as both are associated with positive outcomes for their holders (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012; Brehm & Self, 1989; Henry & Sniezek, 1993). We address this issue in the following study by comparing impressions of women who are high in

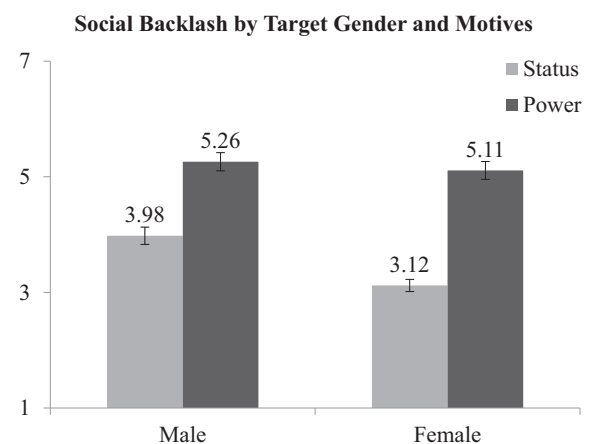


Fig. 2. Social backlash varied by target gender and motives for power or status in Study 2.

one motive and low in the other, with impressions of women who are high or low on both motives.

7. Study 3

In Study 3, we sought to test whether women's desires for power and status interacted to influence their susceptibility to social backlash. To do so, we manipulated women's desire for power (high or low) and desire for status (high or low) orthogonally. We elected to only examine perceptions of female targets given this study concerns how desires for power and status interact to affect perceptions of women. Additionally, the interaction detected in Study 2 was driven by status-seeking female targets appearing the least susceptible to backlash, suggesting that status plays a greater role in lessening social backlash for women than it does for men. As such, we tested whether women's desires for power and status interacted to influence their susceptibility to backlash, such that women who desired high power *and* high status were considered less susceptible to backlash compared to women who desired only power but not status (Hypothesis 3A).

Additionally, given that women's impression-management dilemma involves balancing perceived fit for leadership with adherence to feminine norms, the current study examines how women's varying power and status motives impact their perceived fit for leadership in addition to their susceptibility to social backlash. Although high power motives are viewed more negatively (Study 1) and lead to more social backlash (Study 2), a high power motive may heighten perceived leadership fit, since the power motive conveys more masculinity than the status motive, and masculine traits (e.g., power-seeking) have been positively associated with perceptions of leadership (Schein et al., 1996). However, given that likability is central to women's professional success (Carli et al., 1995; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Rudman, 1998), we expected women's susceptibility to backlash to reduce leadership fit. As such, in Study 3, we explored whether social backlash negatively mediated the relationship between the power motive and perceived leadership fit, and whether the impact of the power motive on social backlash was moderated by the status motive. We expected that, compared to women who desired only power, women who desired both power and status would have similar leadership fit, but incur less social backlash (pre-registration: <https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=uu32ac>).

7.1. Method

7.1.1. Participants and design

We recruited 401 participants (62.3% women, $M_{age} = 33$ years, $SD_{age} = 13$ years) from Prolific for a 2 (women's desire for power: high or low) \times 2 (women's desire for status: high or low) between-subject design. A post-hoc sensitivity analysis revealed that this sample size provided 80% power to detect an effect size of $f = 0.14$. No participants were excluded from the analysis.

7.1.2. Procedure

We employed a similar design to Study 2, where participants were randomly assigned to evaluate a female target who was depicted as desiring both power and status, either power or status, or neither power nor status. We retained the same manipulation as Study 2 for the female targets who desired either power or status. The target that desired both power and status was depicted as scoring in the 96th percentile for desires for power and status, in the 54th percentile for desiring basic physical needs, and in the 48th percentile for desiring security relative to others who took the personality assessment. The target that desired neither power nor status was depicted similarly except she scored in the 13th percentile for the desires for power and status.

7.1.3. Measures

7.1.3.1. Social backlash. We operationalized social backlash as participants' unwillingness to work with a target. For this measure, we used items from Bowles, Babcock, and Lai (2007) and Moss-Racusin et al. (2010), resulting in a 7-item scale in which participants rate the extent to which others would like the applicant (reverse-scored), others would dislike this applicant, the applicant would be popular with colleagues (reverse-scored), others would want to work with this applicant (reverse-scored), others would enjoy working with this applicant (reverse-scored), others would want this applicant on their team (reverse-scored), and how beneficial it would be for others to have this applicant on their team (reverse-scored; $\alpha = 0.94$).²

7.1.3.2. Leadership fit. To measure perceived leadership fit, we combined ratings of how leaderlike the applicant seemed and how likely the applicant was to succeed in corporate America (Opie & Phillips, 2015), both rated on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (very) scale ($\alpha = 0.74$).

7.1.3.3. Manipulation check. Participants answered a multiple-choice question indicating which desire(s) the applicant desired most.

7.2. Results

7.2.1. Analytic approach

We submitted our outcome variables to two-way ANOVAs with desire for power and desire for status serving as our between-subject factors.

7.2.2. Manipulation check

Ninety-four percent of participants correctly answered our manipulation check. All results are reported including responses that failed manipulation checks, as our pattern of results hold constant whether or not those responses are excluded.

7.2.3. Social backlash

As pre-registered, we conducted a two-way ANOVA to test whether targets that desired both power and status were less likely to incur backlash compared to targets that desired power (but not status). In line with existing findings on backlash against power-seeking women (e.g., Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010), a main effect of desire for power emerged as women with a high desire for power were considered more susceptible to backlash ($M = 4.18$; $SD = 1.29$) compared to targets with a low desire for power ($M = 3.08$; $SD = 1.04$), $F(1,397) = 89.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.183$. A main effect for the desire for status did not emerge, $F(1,397) = 0.87$, $p = .351$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$. As shown in Fig. 3, a significant interaction between the desire for power and the desire for status emerged, $F(1,397) = 5.52$, $p = .019$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.014$. Lending causal support for women's Status Compensation Effect, targets who desired both power and status were considered less susceptible to backlash ($M = 3.99$; $SD = 1.22$) compared to targets who possessed a high desire for power but not status ($M = 4.37$; $SD = 1.32$, $t(397) = -2.35$, $p = .019$, $d = 0.30$). Targets who desired neither power nor status ($M = 3.00$; $SD = 0.92$) were evaluated similarly compared to targets who desired status but not power ($M = 3.16$; $SD = 1.14$, $t(397) = 0.99$, $p = .323$, $d = 0.15$).

7.2.4. Leadership fit

We pre-registered the prediction that the female target who desired both power and status would be rated similarly highly on leadership fit compared to the female target who desired power (but not status). In

² Participants also rated targets' perceived warmth, competence, and feminine proscriptive stereotypes. For measures and results, please see Supplemental Materials.

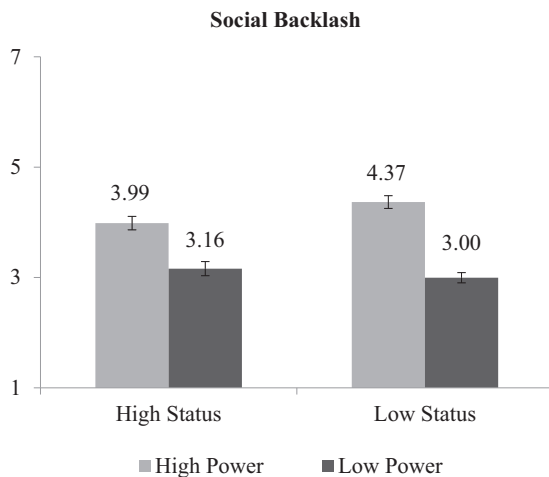


Fig. 3. Social backlash for female targets by motives for power and status (Study 3).

other words, we expected to find a main effect of the desire for power, such that participants with a high desire for power would be rated higher on leadership fit compared to targets with a low desire for power. As such, we conducted a two-way ANOVA. A significant main effect of desire for power emerged, as targets with a high desire for power were rated higher ($M = 5.25$; $SD = 1.13$) than targets with a low desire for power ($M = 3.80$; $SD = 1.32$), $F(1,397) = 141.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.262$. We did not find a significant main effect of desire for status, $F(1,397) = 3.16$, $p = .076$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.008$, nor an interaction, $F(1,397) = 0.31$, $p = .577$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$. This indicates that the desire for power significantly impacts perceptions of leadership fit, which is central to professional evaluations and subsequent ascension up the corporate hierarchy. As such, targets who do not express a desire for power may risk being perceived as having low leadership fit. These results suggest that while perceivers believe a desire for power positively impacts women's perceived leadership fit, women primarily incur backlash for desiring power, but not status.

7.2.5. Moderated mediation

In an exploratory vein, we then tested whether the status motive moderated the relationship between the power motive and perceived leadership fit, which was mediated by social backlash. We ran a moderated mediation model using Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 7 with 5000 resamples). The power motive was entered as the independent variable, the status motive as the moderator, susceptibility to social backlash as the mediator, and perceived leadership as the dependent variable (see Fig. 4). The power motive significantly increased leadership fit (direct effect = 1.86, $SE = 0.13$, 95% CI [1.61, 2.11]) while social backlash decreased leadership fit (direct effect = -0.37 , $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.47 , -0.28]). Social backlash significantly mediated the effect of power-seeking on perceived leadership fit both when the status motive was high (indirect effect = -0.31 , $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI [-0.48 , -0.17]) and low (indirect effect = -0.51 , $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI [-0.69 , -0.34]). Importantly, the moderated mediation was supported (indirect effect = 0.20, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.38]), indicating that the difference between the conditional indirect effects was significant. In other words, power-seeking resulted in more social backlash for women when their desire for status was low than high.

7.3. Discussion

Study 3 provides support for the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect (Hypothesis 3A), that women with high motives for both power and status are considered less susceptible to backlash compared to

women with a high power motive but low status motive. We also found that women who possessed low motives for power and status were considered least susceptible to backlash. However, given the desire for power significantly increased women's perceived leadership fit, women who do not possess desires for power or status may risk being perceived as having lower leadership fit. Taken together, women who have high motives for both power and status benefit by being perceived as highly leaderlike, but also incur less backlash than women who have a high motive for power but not status.

While Studies 1–3 allowed us to test causal relationships between targets' power motives and status motives as they relate to backlash and perceived leadership fit, they relied on hypothetical vignettes, limiting the generalizability of our findings. In the next study, we address this shortcoming by allowing motives for status and power to naturally vary, moving beyond the realm of hypothetical evaluations to test whether men and women's experience of backlash mirrors the patterns observed in experiments.

8. Study 4

The previous study provided initial evidence of an interactive relationship between women's power and status motives in predicting their susceptibility to social backlash. In Study 4, we sought to establish generalizability of this effect beyond perceivers' evaluations of hypothetical individuals. To do so, we conducted exploratory analysis to determine whether support for the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect emerged in a naturalistic setting, specifically in the context of a dyadic interview exercise. By separating out target motives and perceiver judgments, we sought to understand how women's power motives and status motives interacted to affect perceivers' judgments of them, such that women's higher power motives were predicted to lead to greater social backlash when their status motive was low, but not when their status motive was high (Status Compensation Effect; Hypothesis 3A).

Additionally, in the current study, we examined perceptions of men to understand whether the interaction between power motives and status motives on backlash applied only to perceptions of women, but not to perceptions of men. Given Study 1 found that status motives were more congruent with feminine norms than power motives, one possibility is that the dual-faceted nature of status would interact with the power motive only in influencing perceptions of women, as the power motive and status motive might serve competing functions for women. However, given Study 1 found that both desires appeared more masculine than feminine, one could argue that desires for power and status would not interact to influence backlash for men (Hypothesis 3B). As such, in the current study, we conducted exploratory analysis to test for a three-way interaction between target gender, power-motive, and status-motive (pre-registration: <https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=w45wr4>).

8.1. Method

8.1.1. Participants

The sample was comprised of full-time MBA students at a highly-selective public West Coast university. Three hundred thirty-one students (39% women, $M_{age} = 29$ years, $SD_{age} = 3$ years, average work experience: 5 years) were enrolled in the MBA program and split into four different cohorts. Twenty-one percent of students were from outside of the United States. Sixty-one percent of students identified as White or Caucasian, while 39% of students identified as Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, or Multiethnic. Of the 331 students, 321 students (targets) participated in the exercise. Each student was interviewed by either 1 (52% of targets), 2 (46% of targets), or 3 (1% of targets) other students (raters), yielding a total of 501 ratings. From these ratings, 44 responses were dropped due to missing data, leaving 457 responses from raters. A post-hoc sensitivity analysis revealed that

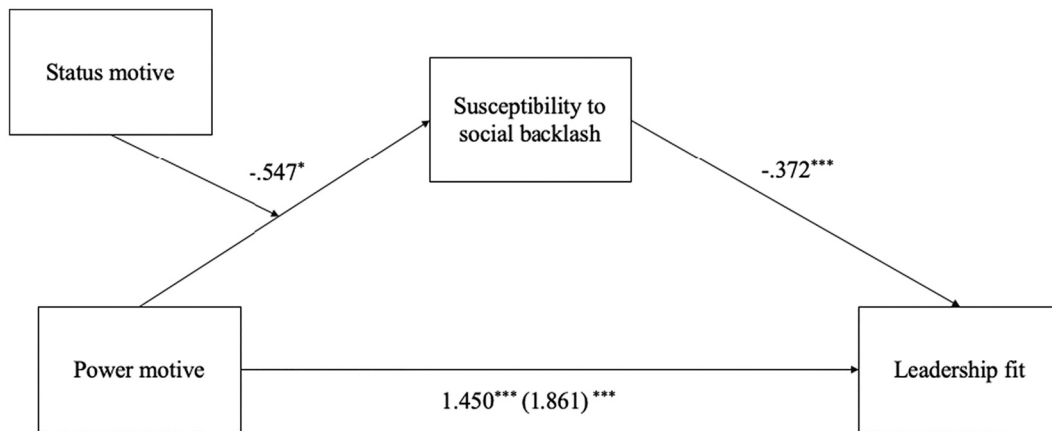


Fig. 4. Moderated mediation using Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 7 with 5000 resamples; Study 3).

this sample size provided 80% power to detect an effect size of $f^2 = 0.024$.

8.1.2. Procedure

As part of a classroom exercise, participants were tasked with conducting unstructured interviews with 1–2 other classmates in a cohort outside of their own with the aim of accurately estimating their interviewees' performance on the midterm exam. If participants made accurate estimations, they received extra credit in the course, suggesting that participants were incentivized to conduct interviews of sufficient length and depth for the purposes of this study. For exact instructions on the exercise, please see the Online Supplement. Interviews were conducted in a dyadic format within three weeks of the start of the course. Given that prior research involving the use of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT; Murray, 1943) shows that latent power motives appear in how individuals frame and discuss situations (Winter, 1973), we maintain that participants would be able to discern targets' chronic desires for power and status during the interview.

8.2. Measures

8.2.1. Power motives and status motives

All participants completed a pre-course survey in which they rated themselves on the 6-item power motive scale ($\alpha = 0.74$; example item: I would like to have more control; Lammers, Stoker, Rink, & Galinsky, 2016), and the 8-item status motive scale ($\alpha = 0.80$; example item: I want my peers to respect me and hold me in high esteem; Flynn et al., 2006), both rated on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale.

8.2.2. Social backlash

After each interview, participants rated the extent to which each target appeared rebellious, controlling, cynical, stubborn, arrogant, pushy, and demanding on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (very) Likert scale ($\alpha = 0.88$; Prentice & Carranza, 2002). We used the same feminine prescriptive stereotypes employed in Study 1 as those items have previously been used to measure women's dominance penalty (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). However, we removed the term "promiscuous" from our measure as it did not fit the context.

8.2.3. Control measures

To rule out alternative explanations for our results, we controlled for target attractiveness as a robustness check, given existing research suggests that attractiveness activates a "what is beautiful is good" stereotype (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991), such that attractive individuals are rated more favorably than less attractive individuals. Participants completed a single

item measuring the target's physical attractiveness (This person would generally be considered physically attractive) which was rated on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Additionally, although prior research has established that status and likability are conceptually distinct (for a review, see Anderson et al., 2015), we controlled for perceived likability as a robustness check to establish that targets' status motive can impact social backlash independent of likability. Participants indicated targets' likability using a single-item measure (This person was likable during the interview) which was rated on 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Finally, we controlled for rater gender. We were unable to control for target ethnicity as we did not possess this information for individual students in our response set. The pattern of results holds regardless of whether we control for target likability, target attractiveness, and rater gender. See Table 1 for correlations between all outcome variables.³

8.3. Results

8.3.1. Analytic approach

For our exploratory analysis, we conducted hierarchical linear regression analysis via the "lmer" function in R. We created a dummy variable in which each unique rater and unique target were given an ID number. To account for the non-independence of our responses, as most raters interviewed multiple targets and most targets were interviewed more than once, we included random intercepts for target ID and rater ID in all our regression analyses. All continuous predictor and control variables were mean-centered. Target gender (men coded as -0.5 , women coded as 0.5) and self-reported power motive and status motive served as our predictor variables. Target attractiveness, target likability, and rater gender served as our control variables. Social backlash served as our outcome variable. To investigate whether underlying motives for power and status interacted with target gender to predict social backlash, we ran four models (see Table 2), all of which contained random intercepts for target ID and rater ID: Model 1 contained main effects of target gender, power motive, and status motive; Model 2 added two-way interactions between the three variables; Model 3 added the three-way

³ Given this was part of a classroom exercise, the survey contained additional exploratory measures (e.g., perceived competence and warmth, estimated midterm performance) that will not be discussed further in the main manuscript. Additionally, participants indicated targets' susceptibility to backlash using the measure from Study 2, as well as a single item measure of likability. For susceptibility to backlash, the three-way interaction between target gender, power motive, and status motive was only marginal and is not discussed further in the manuscript. The single item measure of likability did not yield any significant main effects (apart from attractiveness) or interactions. For results, see Supplemental Materials.

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals for Study 4 variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender	0.39	0.49					
2. Social Backlash	2.12	1.03	-0.10*				
			[-0.18, -0.01]				
3. Power Motive	5.34	0.74	-0.01	0.05			
			[-0.10, 0.08]	[-0.05, 0.14]			
4. Status Motive	5.55	0.73	0.12**	0.04	0.18**		
			[0.03, 0.21]	[-0.06, 0.13]	[0.09, 0.27]		
5. Likability	6.24	0.85	0.10*	-0.36**	0.05	0.08	
			[0.01, 0.19]	[-0.44, -0.28]	[-0.04, 0.15]	[-0.01, 0.17]	
6. Attractiveness	5.38	1.22	0.16**	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.41**
			[0.07, 0.25]	[-0.09, 0.09]	[-0.02, 0.17]	[-0.03, 0.16]	[0.33, 0.48]

Note. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

Table 2
Random effects model of target gender, power motive, and status motive predicting social backlash in Study 4. All continuous predictors are mean-centered, while binary predictors are effect-coded.

	Model 1: Independent variables	Model 2: Independent variables with two-way interactions	Model 3: Independent variables with two-way and three-way interactions	Model 4: Independent variables with interactions and controls
Intercept (Social Backlash)	2.063*** (0.056)	2.068*** (0.057)	2.059*** (0.057)	2.037*** (0.054)
Target Gender	-0.257** (0.090)	-0.266** (0.091)	-0.231* (0.091)	-0.222* (0.086)
Power Motive	0.040 (0.062)	0.049 (0.063)	0.054 (0.062)	0.039 (0.059)
Status Motive	0.029 (0.062)	0.034 (0.063)	0.051 (0.062)	0.066 (0.059)
Rater Gender	-	-	-	-0.376*** (0.102)
Likability	-	-	-	-0.419*** (0.052)
Attractiveness	-	-	-	0.147*** (0.037)
Target Gender x Power Motive	-	0.146 (0.129)	0.139 (0.128)	-0.010 (0.121)
Target Gender x Status Motive	-	0.011 (0.127)	-0.022 (0.126)	0.029 (0.119)
Power Motive x Status Motive	-	-0.042 (0.085)	-0.056 (0.084)	-0.032 (0.078)
Target Gender x Power Motive x Status Motive	-	-	-0.443** (0.164)	-0.456** (0.154)
Observations - Num. of Raters	457 294	457 294	457 294	429 282
Num. of Targets	286	286	286	284
AIC	1227.097	1231.590	1226.185	1088.847

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

interaction; Model 4 added controls for target attractiveness, target likability, and rater gender.

8.3.2. Social backlash

In Model 1, we found a main effect of participant gender such that women incurred less backlash compared to men ($b = -0.26$, $t(222) = -2.86$, $p = .005$), which is understandable given that our measure consisted of feminine proscriptive stereotypes, which fulfill masculine norms. No additional main effects emerged. No significant two-way interactions emerged in Model 2. In Model 3, we found a significant three-way interaction between target gender, status motive, and power motive without controls ($b = -0.44$, $t(223) = -2.70$, $p = .007$) and in Model 4 when controlling for target attractiveness, likability, and rater gender as shown in Fig. 5, $b = -0.46$, $t(230) = -2.96$, $p = .003$.

For women, a significant interaction emerged between power motive and status motive, $b = -0.26$, $t(235) = -2.33$, $p = .021$. Simple slopes analysis indicates that when women were high on the status motive (1

SD above the mean), the simple slope for the power motive was not significant, $b = -0.16$, $t(250) = -1.33$, $p = .186$. However, when women were low on the status motive (1 SD below the mean), higher power motives were marginally associated with a higher likelihood of backlash, $b = 0.22$, $t(247) = 1.83$, $p = .068$.

This suggests that for power-seeking women, possessing a high status motive may temper their likelihood of incurring backlash. However, considering the status motive is still a motivation to ascend the social hierarchy thus signaling agency (as suggested by Study 1), we found that women with a low power motive were marginally associated with increased backlash as their status motive increased, while women who had low motives for both power and status were associated with the least backlash, as they were likely perceived as the least threatening to the existing gender hierarchy. For impressions of men, an interaction between their power motive and status motive did not emerge, $b = -0.20$, $t(238) = 1.81$, $p = .071$.

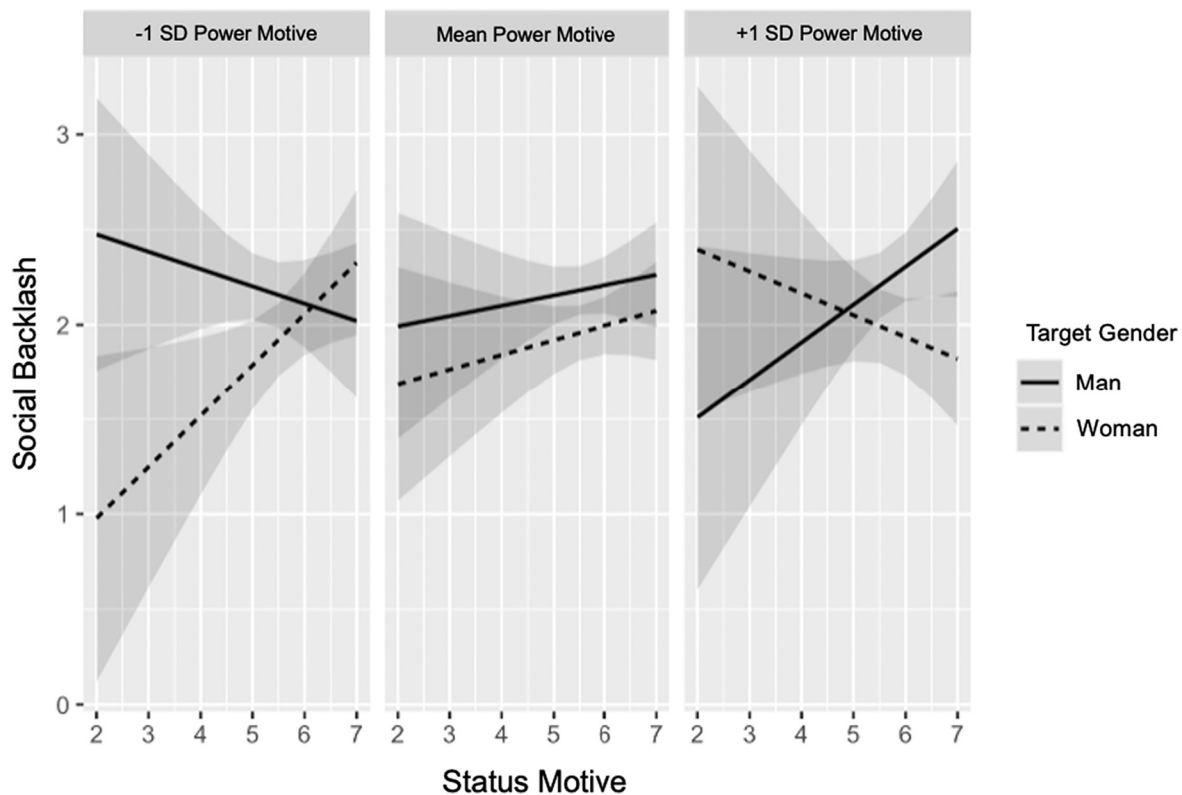


Fig. 5. Social backlash (in the form of dominance penalties) for Study 4 targets as varied by target gender, status motive, and power motive.

8.4. Discussion

Study 4 provides support for the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect (Hypothesis 3A) beyond perceivers' evaluations of hypothetical targets found in the previous studies, as it provides evidence suggesting that women's self-reported status motives and power motives interact to affect perceivers' evaluations of them in a naturalistic setting. When women possessed low status motives, they were marginally associated with more backlash as a function of their higher power motives. However, when women possessed high status motives, their increasing power motives did not impact their likelihood of incurring backlash, thus producing a significant interaction between women's power motives and status motives on their likelihood of incurring backlash. This evidence lends support to the idea that the status motive may serve a compensatory function in helping power-seeking women appear more gender-congruent. In other words, women who desire power may mitigate their risk of incurring backlash by also desiring status.

Additionally, the findings from Study 4 lend support to Hypothesis 3B, given the power motive and status motive only interacted for impressions of women, but not for impressions of men. This suggests that the power motive and status motive may serve similar functions for men, while serving compensatory functions for women. Given that Study 1 found that the power motive and status motive were overall more aligned with masculine prescriptive stereotypes than with feminine prescriptive stereotypes, men's desires for power and status may be unrelated to the perception that they are in violation of masculine norms.

9. Study 5

The previous study provided further evidence of an interactive relationship between women's power and status motives in predicting

their susceptibility to social backlash. In Study 5, we sought to conduct a confirmatory test of Hypothesis 3A and 3B among participants' firsthand experiences of backlash. We tested for a three-way interaction between participant gender, power motive, and status motive on social backlash to test whether the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect is unique to women. Specifically, we expected to find that the power motive and status motive would interact for women (Hypothesis 3A), as their status motives would moderate the extent to which their higher power motives were predictive of greater social backlash. Specifically, women with low status motives would be associated with greater backlash as a function of their increasing power motives, but when women had high status motives, higher power motives would not predict greater social backlash. We did not expect the power motive and status motive to interact for men (Hypothesis 3B), given that the power motive and status motive both fulfill masculine stereotypes more than they fulfill feminine stereotypes, implying they serve similar functions for men but compensatory functions for women (pre-registration: https://aspredicted.org/RHP_WFJ).⁴

9.1. Method

9.1.1. Participants

We recruited 505 employed participants (50% women, 75% White or Caucasian, $M_{age} = 39$ years, $SD_{age} = 11$ years) with a minimum of five years of work experience (26% had 5–9 years of work experience, 40%

⁴ We note that our pre-registration states that we expected the interactive relationship between the power motive and status motive to be stronger for female participants than male participants. In the manuscript, we broke down the predicted three-way interaction into two separate hypotheses (H3A and H3B) for ease of presentation.

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals for Study 5 variables.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Dominance Penalty	2.62	1.62					
2. Likability Penalty	2.45	1.13	0.67** [0.62, 0.72]				
3. Social Backlash Composite	2.54	1.26	0.94** [0.93, 0.95]	0.88** [0.86, 0.90]			
4. Economic Backlash Composite	3.16	1.31	0.47** [0.40, 0.54]	0.50** [0.43, 0.56]	0.53** [0.46, 0.59]		
5. Power Motive	4.43	1.09	0.19** [0.10, 0.27]	-0.03 [-0.12, 0.06]	0.11* [0.02, 0.19]	0.07 [-0.02, 0.15]	
6. Status Motive	4.62	1.17	0.12** [0.04, 0.21]	-0.07 [-0.16, 0.02]	0.05 [-0.04, 0.13]	-0.01 [-0.10, 0.08]	0.55** [0.49, 0.61]

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

had 10–20 years of work experience, 34% had over 20 years of work experience) through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk.⁵ Thirteen percent of participants worked in education, 12% in healthcare, 12% in information technology, 10% in manufacturing, 8% in retail, 7% in financial services, while the remaining 51% were spread across industries such as technology, media, insurance, construction, etc. Thirty-one percent of participants worked at companies employing over 1000 employees, while the remaining participants worked at companies with fewer than 1000 employees. As pre-registered, we excluded responses from six participants who failed a basic attention check where we asked participants to “Please select agree” on a Likert scale, leaving a total sample size of 499 participants. A post-hoc sensitivity analysis revealed that this sample size provided 80% power to detect an effect size of $f^2 = 0.022$.

9.1.2. Procedure

Participants were told that they would complete three unrelated tasks. In the first portion of the survey, participants rated themselves on the same 6-item power motive scale ($\alpha = 0.73$; Lammers et al., 2016) and 8-item status motive scale ($\alpha = 0.88$; Flynn et al., 2006) utilized in Study 4, both rated on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Participants then moved on to the second portion of the study, which consisted of three problem-solving tasks that served as distractor items. We included these questions to reduce the likelihood of participants suspecting that the study pertained to the relationship between power motives, status motives, and backlash. After completing the distractor items, participants moved onto the final portion of the study with our dependent variables. Participants first indicated their current industry, their formal title, the size of their organization, and the number of coworkers they worked with on a regular basis.

9.1.3. Social backlash

Participants then indicated the extent to which they believed they had incurred social backlash in the form of dominance penalties and likability penalties. As in Study 4, participants indicated the extent to which their colleagues had perceived them to be rebellious, controlling, arrogant, cynical, stubborn, pushy, and demanding (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), which were combined to form a Dominance Penalty subscale ($\alpha = 0.95$) of the larger Social Backlash composite. However, we expanded our measure of social backlash from Study 4 to include a second subscale, the Likability Penalty, which consisted of the following

⁵ We were unable to conduct exploratory analysis with participant race as a factor as we did not collect enough of a sample of non-White participants (10% Black or African American, 9% Asian or Asian American, 4% Hispanic or Latino, 1% Other). As pre-registered, we included participant race as a control variable in our analysis.

six items: I have been excluded from work-related social gatherings, Others perceive me as unfriendly, Others perceive me as unapproachable, Others want to work with me (reverse-scored), Others feel comfortable approaching me for help (reverse-scored), Others consider me likable (reverse-scored). These six items were combined to form the Likability Penalty subscale ($\alpha = 0.82$) of the larger Social Backlash composite ($\alpha = 0.93$). All items were measured on a 1 (not at all true) to 7 (very true) Likert scale. Finally, participants provided their demographic information. See Table 3 for correlations between all outcome variables.

9.2. Results

9.2.1. Analytic approach

As pre-registered, we conducted linear regression analysis via the “lm” function in R to test for a three-way interaction between participant gender, power motive, and status motive on predicting social backlash. All continuous predictor and control variables were mean-centered. Target gender (men coded as -0.5 , women coded as 0.5) and self-reported power motive and status motive served as our predictor variables, while social backlash served as our outcome variable. We ran four models (see Table 4) in which Model 1 contained main effects of target gender, power motive, and status motive; Model 2 added two-way interactions between the three variables; Model 3 added the three-way interaction; Model 4 added pre-registered controls for participant age, participant race (White coded as -0.5 , Non-White coded as 0.5), and number of coworkers.⁶ Our pattern of results holds regardless of whether we include controls.

9.2.2. Social backlash

In Model 1, significant main effects of participant gender ($b = 0.40$, $t(495) = 3.57$, $p < .001$) and power motive emerged ($b = 0.16$, $t(495) = 2.52$, $p = .012$), such that women and higher power motives were

⁶ Although we pre-registered that we would control for participants’ industry, we dropped this control as it added sixteen additional binary predictor variables to the model (given participants selected from sixteen different industries), making the results difficult to interpret. Our pattern of results holds regardless of whether we control for participants’ industry.

Table 4

Linear model of target gender, power-motive, and status-motive predicting social backlash in Study 5. All continuous predictors are mean-centered, while binary predictors are effect-coded.

	Model 1: Independent variables	Model 2: Independent variables with two- way interactions	Model 3: Independent variables with two-way and three-way interactions	Model 4: Independent variables with interactions and controls
Intercept (Social Backlash composite)	2.538*** (0.056)	2.656*** (0.061)	2.652*** (0.060)	2.692*** (0.068)
Gender	0.400*** (0.112)	0.431*** (0.110)	0.548*** (0.121)	0.553*** (0.121)
Power-motive	0.155[†] (0.062)	0.145[†] (0.061)	0.168** (0.061)	0.162** (0.061)
Status-motive	-0.039 (0.057)	-0.081 (0.057)	-0.098 (0.058)	-0.088 (0.058)
Age	-	-	-	-0.008 (0.005)
Race	-	-	-	0.157 (0.128)
Number of coworkers	-	-	-	-0.008 (0.009)
Gender x Power-motive	-	0.220 (0.123)	0.197 (0.123)	0.192 (0.123)
Gender x Status-motive	-	-0.150 (0.115)	-0.180 (0.115)	-0.174 (0.115)
Power-motive x Status-motive	-	-0.152*** (0.035)	-0.137*** (0.035)	-0.137*** (0.035)
Gender x Power-motive x Status-motive	-	-	-0.163[†] (0.070)	-0.159[†] (0.070)
<i>F</i>	6.248	6.699	6.564	5.192
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.031	0.064	0.073	0.078

Standard errors in parentheses. [†] $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .01$.

associated with greater social backlash.⁷ A main effect of the status motive did not emerge, $b = -0.04$, $t(495) = -0.67$, $p = .502$. In Model 2, a significant interaction between the power motive and status motive ($b = -0.15$, $t(492) = -4.41$, $p < .001$) indicated that for participants with high power motives (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean), higher status motives were associated with reduced backlash.

Importantly, consistent with Hypothesis 3A-3B and the Status Compensation Hypothesis, we found the predicted three-way interaction between target gender, status motive, and power motive in Model 3 without controls ($b = -0.16$, $t(491) = -2.32$, $p = .021$) and in Model 4 with controls as shown in Fig. 6, $b = -0.16$, $t(488) = -2.27$, $p = .024$. For women, higher power motives were associated with more backlash ($b = 0.26$, $t(488) = 2.91$, $p = .004$), while higher status motives were associated with less backlash ($b = -0.18$, $t(488) = -2.01$, $p = .045$). For women, a significant interaction between power motive and status motive emerged, $b = -0.22$, $t(488) = -4.85$, $p < .001$. Simple slopes analysis indicated that when women were low on the status motive (1 SD below the mean), higher power motives were associated with a higher likelihood of backlash, $b = 0.51$, $t(488) = 4.79$, $p < .001$. However, lending support to the Status Compensation Effect, when women were

high on the status motive (1 SD above the mean), the simple slope for the power motive was not significant, $b = 0.004$, $t(488) = 0.04$, $p = .967$.

For men, no significant main effects nor a significant power-motive \times status-motive interaction emerged ($b = -0.06$, $t(488) = -1.07$, $p = .287$).⁸

9.3. Discussion

Study 5 serves as a confirmatory test of Hypothesis 3A-3B and provides evidence suggesting that the documented Status Compensation Effect replicates in women's recall of experienced backlash. As expected, we find that power motives and status motives interact for women's experience of social backlash, but not men's, suggesting that power motives and status motives serve compensatory functions for women. Specifically, we find that for women with low status motives, higher power motives were associated with greater social backlash. However,

⁷ The main effect of women being associated with greater backlash in Study 5 runs counter to our findings from Study 2 and Study 4 in which a main effect indicated that male targets incurred more backlash. This may be because this study employs a paradigm in which participants recall their personal experiences with backlash, rather than a paradigm in which participants make judgments of targets. It may be that women, at a baseline, are rightfully more sensitive to the same level of negative judgment, given women's likability is more closely linked to success than men's (Carli et al., 1995) and women are penalized at greater rates than men for the same infractions (Brescoll, Dawson, & Uhlmann, 2010). As such, women may be more readily able to recall instances of backlash compared to men. However, given the present research investigates the interaction of power motives and status motives for women, rather than main effects associated with varying paradigms, this is not discussed further. Additional research is needed to address how women's recall of backlash differs from men's recall of backlash.

⁸ As pre-registered, we separately analyzed the two subscales for social backlash and found that results between the dominance penalty and likability penalty were highly similar. For the dominance penalty, we found a significant three-way interaction in Model 3 without controls ($b = -0.18$, $t(491) = -2.05$, $p = .041$) and in Model 4 with controls ($b = -0.18$, $t(488) = -2.02$, $p = .044$). For the likability penalty, we found a significant three-way interaction in Model 3 without controls ($b = -0.14$, $t(491) = -2.25$, $p = .025$) and in Model 4 with controls ($b = -0.14$, $t(488) = -2.17$, $p = .030$). We deviated from our pre-registration and elected to only report results of the combined Social Backlash composite given the results between the two subscales were very similar.

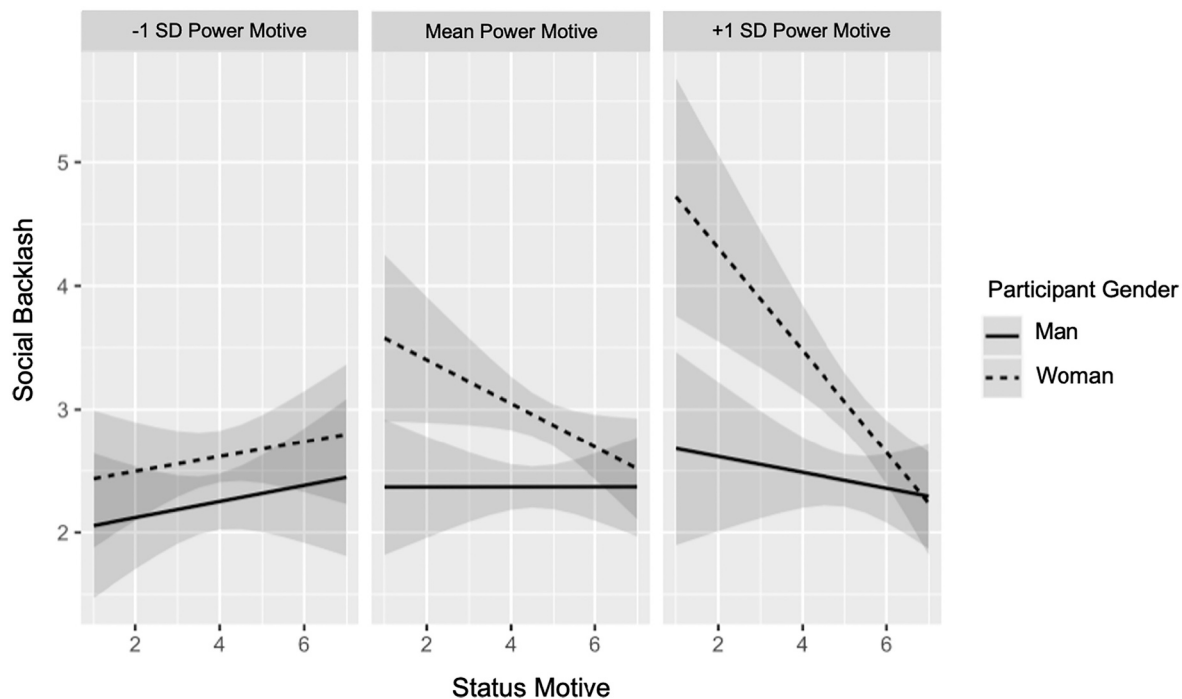


Fig. 6. Self-reported social backlash as varied by target gender, status motive, and power motive (Study 5).

for women with high status motives, a higher power motive was not predictive of social backlash.⁹

10. General discussion

The current research disentangles how motives for power and status

⁹ Given that backlash is defined in both social terms (e.g., dominance and likability penalties) and economic terms (e.g., hiring and pay raises; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Glick, & Phelan, 2012), in addition to measuring social backlash, we also asked participants to indicate the extent to which they have incurred economic penalties. However, the results were mixed and revealed no interaction between target gender, power motive, and status motive, $b = -0.05$, $t(488) = -0.61$, $p = .542$. For measures and results, see online supplement. One possibility is that the Status Compensation Effect only applies to women's social penalties and does not extend to women's economic penalties. Another possible explanation for the lack of interaction on economic penalties could be that we only collected subjective measures of economic penalties (e.g., participants feeling that they did not get a raise they deserved), rather than objective measures (salary, length of time in current role, etc.), which could better shed light on participants' experiences of economic penalties. Additionally, it is possible that the lack of a three-way interaction on economic backlash is due to economic backlash being a more distal consequence of power-seeking and status-seeking, in that there are many more factors that influence economic backlash (i.e., actual work performance) compared to social backlash. Further, while previous research has captured backlash in the form of social penalties (e.g., reduced likeability, social attraction, or willingness to work with a woman) (e.g., Bowles et al., 2007; Infanger, Rudman, & Sczesny, 2016), discrimination in decisions around hiring and promotions (e.g., Heilman, 2001; Lyness & Judiesch, 1999) or a combination of the two (Janoff-Bulman & Wade, 1996; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012), backlash has largely been examined from an evaluator's perspective, rather than from a self-report perspective. Some research has measured women's fear of backlash (e.g., Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010) but not self-reported backlash. As such, it is plausible that economic backlash is not discernable at the same level to individuals who experience the discrimination firsthand. These mixed results suggest that more empirical research is needed to disentangle how first-hand reports of backlash differ for social penalties and economic penalties.

independently and interactively impact perceptions of women, with the aim of understanding how women might possess desires for hierarchical ascension while minimizing their likelihood of backlash. We investigate the relationship between gender and the two bases of social hierarchy using a variety of methods including experiments, vignettes, correlational data, and face-to-face interactions. We find evidence supporting the Status Compensation Effect in samples of working professionals, MBA students, and online participants.

In Study 1, we directly measured how a gender-neutral target possessing motives for power or status is perceived by others. While both motives conveyed more masculinity than femininity, the target who desired status was more congruent with feminine prescriptive stereotypes compared to the target who desired power. In Study 2, we found that women who desired status were considered less susceptible to backlash than women who desired power (to a greater extent than men). Study 3 provided evidence supporting the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect, revealing an interactive relationship between women's motives for power and status such that compared to women who only desired power, women who simultaneously possessed high desires for power and status were considered less susceptible to backlash, but were also considered equally leaderlike. These results highlight how women who desire both status and power can effectively navigate women's "Catch-22" by appearing leaderlike while minimizing likability penalties. Study 4 provided evidence suggesting that the Status Compensation Effect was evident in perceivers' face-to-face interactions with men and women who had varying desires for power and status, extending our findings beyond perceivers' evaluations of hypothetical targets. Finally, Study 5 served as a confirmatory test of the Status Compensation Effect, finding that the effect was unique to women, as power and status served compensatory functions for women but complementary functions for men. In summary, the present findings reveal that women might benefit from communicating their desire for power along with a desire for status, as expressing desires to control resources in concert with intentions to seek respect and admiration from others is more consistent with feminine gender role prescriptions.

10.1. Theoretical contribution

Our findings enrich the literatures on social hierarchy (e.g., Magee & Galinsky, 2008) and backlash theory (e.g., Rudman, 1998) by examining how an additional status component impacts backlash against women. The literature on social hierarchy has delineated the conceptual distinction between power and status, but the perceptual differences between men and women who possess motives for power and status remain relatively unexplored. On the other hand, backlash theory has highlighted penalties against women who desire power (e.g., Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010), but has confounded power and status in the examination of power-seeking women. By disentangling the desire for status from the desire for power, we gain greater insight into the types of agentic displays that allow women to minimize deviations from prescribed feminine stereotypes and leave them less susceptible to backlash while also appearing more leaderlike.

The present findings also contribute to the growing literature on dominance and prestige, which finds that dominance and prestige are behavioral strategies for navigating social hierarchies, while power and status are forms of social hierarchies (Cheng & Tracy, 2014; Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kingstone, & Henrich, 2013; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Maner, 2017). By finding evidence in support of the Status Compensation Effect, the current research reveals that women can employ “feminized” forms of agency to navigate the “Catch-22.” Similar to how motives for both power and status conveyed masculinity, but status motives conveyed more femininity than power motives, it may be that prestige strategies convey more femininity than dominance strategies. Existing research supports this assertion, as prestige strategies are characterized by building relationships and earning respect from others through transparency and honesty (Maner, 2017), appearing congruent with women’s prescribed communal stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Conversely, dominance strategies consist of using coercion, intimidation, and even punishment (Redhead, Cheng, Driver, Foulsham, & O’Gorman, 2019), aligning more closely with masculine stereotypes. Acknowledging that it is presently unknown whether the desires for power and status are motivational antecedents of the use of dominance and prestige as strategies, respectively, the present findings suggest that women may be able to balance their use of dominance strategies with prestige strategies to lessen backlash while also maintaining impressions of leadership fit.

Finally, by investigating how perceivers react differently to men and women’s desires for power and/or status, the current work builds upon previous literature examining social perceptions of individuals who already possess high power and/or status (e.g., Fragale, Overbeck, & Neale, 2011; Hu, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2016; Wingen & Dohle, 2021) by adding a gender component. For example, Fragale et al. (2011) found evidence suggesting that, absent any information on gender, targets who possessed high status or high power were perceived to be more dominant, but targets who had power without status were perceived as the least warm. Evidence suggests that possessing power without status fosters demeaning behavior towards others (Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2012), and our findings suggest that negative behaviors enacted by individuals with high power and low status may evoke especially strong reactions when enacted by women, as we find that power and status serve competing functions in influencing women’s likelihood of incurring backlash. However, our evidence suggests that power and status do not interact to influence perceptions of men (as they relate to likability penalties or conformity to feminine proscriptive stereotypes). Additionally, we find that beyond conveying only dominance, desires for power and status convey overall more masculinity (inclusive of additional traits such as assertiveness and decisiveness) than femininity. However, we note that our findings examine perceptions of individuals who desire power and/or status, whereas the cited literature examines perceptions of individuals who already possess high power and/or status. Given reactions to individuals may differ depending on whether they are pursuing leadership, as opposed to already occupying positions

of leadership (Rosette & Tost, 2010), additional research is needed to understand how target gender impacts perceptions of individuals who possess power and/or status, versus seek power and/or status.

10.2. Limitations and future directions

Our multi-method approach supported our theory of the Status Compensation Effect, which describes how women who desire both power and status incur less backlash than women who desire only power. However, our findings are not without limitations. First, we note limitations in sample size across some of our studies. In Study 2, our sample allowed us to detect an effect size of $f = 0.18$, but our detected effect size was $f = 0.16$. Given this study was conducted on undergraduate students enrolled in a business course, our sample was limited by the number of students who were enrolled in the course and elected to participate in the study.

In Study 3, our sample size allowed us to detect an effect size of $f = 0.14$, while our detected effect size was $f = 0.12$. In Study 4, we were limited by the number of students who elected to enroll in the MBA program and participate in the exercise. Our sample allowed us to detect an effect size of $f^2 = 0.024$, but our detected effect size was $f^2 = 0.013$. However, the fact that we found consistent interactions between women’s power motives and status motives across Studies 3–5 gives us confidence in the reliability of our results.

Additionally, although the present findings imply that women who seek promotions should balance any expression of their desire for greater control over resources by acknowledging their aims to earn the respect and admiration of those they serve, we note that our research investigates perceptions of individuals who possess desires for power and status, rather than perceptions of individuals who communicate these desires, or enact behaviors associated with power-seeking or status-seeking. Our research suggests that, on a theoretical level, women who desire status incur less backlash than women who desire power. However, to provide practical advice to women seeking to ascend the organizational hierarchy, future research may investigate how these desires are best communicated to others. For instance, research finds that ingratiation and cooperative tactics are linked to attaining higher status (Jones, Gergen, & Jones, 1963; Tortoriello, Perrone, & McEvilly, 2011) whereas coercion and reward-systems have been linked to control over valued resources (e.g., French, Raven, & Cartwright, 1959). Thus, future research might examine reactions to men and women who use either ingratiation or coercion tactics.

Moreover, we note that the present research does not explore contextual moderators. For instance, our research samples were largely derived from U.S. populations, leaving it unclear as to whether our findings would generalize to cultures that differ from U.S. contexts. Recent research has shown that cultural orientation influences whether power and status are viewed as closely related (To, Leslie, Torelli, & Stoner, 2020), suggesting that perceptions of high power and high status do not always go hand-in-hand. As such, the effectiveness of women’s Status Compensation Effect may vary depending on whether they are operating in an environment where perceivers are high on vertical collectivism, or horizontal collectivism. To address this, future research might examine how social backlash for women with varying motives for power and status are impacted by perceivers’ cultural orientations. Another important contextual moderator for future research to explore would be to test whether support for the hypothesized Status Compensation Effect is moderated by whether focal women are working in male versus female-dominated industries. Past research has shown that biases against women are more pronounced in male-dominated contexts (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). However, given perceiver gender has not been found to moderate backlash (e.g., Brescoll et al., 2018), it may be that the Status Compensation Effect operates similarly in both male and female-dominated contexts. Future research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of how these contextual moderators may exacerbate or mitigate the extent to which desires for status compensate for

the risks inherent to women's desire for power.

Finally, the present studies were unable to explore how women's racial identities might impact the extent to which their power and status motives elicited backlash. Our correlational studies either did not contain adequate samples of non-White participants, or we were unable to connect participant race to individual responses. Additionally, our experiments manipulated target gender by using an ostensibly White name (Alice). Given that Black and Asian female leaders experience backlash differently from White female leaders (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012; Opie & Phillips, 2015; Rosette, de Leon, Koval, & Harrison, 2018), future research should examine how women's racial identities, in addition their motives for power and status, might impact their likelihood of incurring backlash.

10.3. Conclusion

As women are increasing in representation in the workforce but remain underrepresented in leadership positions, understanding how women may position themselves to ascend social and organizational hierarchies while minimizing backlash is crucial. Our research suggests that, on a theoretical level, women who desire status incur less backlash than women who desire power, and when power-seeking women also desire status, they can mitigate their likelihood of incurring backlash. As such, our findings raise the possibility that former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton might have incurred less backlash if she had balanced her desire for power with a desire for status, thus conveying enough masculinity to be perceived as leaderlike, while also conveying femininity to minimize backlash. While we may never know whether this strategy would have afforded her an election victory, our research informs how women may wield their desires for power and status to ascend professional hierarchies.

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Open practices

The studies in this article earned Open Materials, Open Data, and Preregistration badges for transparent practices. Materials and data for the studies are available at <https://osf.io/5gy6a/>.

The preregistrations for Studies 1, 3–5 can be found at each respective link: Study 1 {https://aspredicted.org/Y2G_V25}, Study 3 {<https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=uu32ac>}, Study 4 {<https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=w45wr4>}, Study 5 {https://aspredicted.org/RHP_WFJ}.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2022.104355>.

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