

Rationales in Social Exchange:
The Impact of Rationales and the Role of Attachment in Negotiations and Markets

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ABSTRACT

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Negotiations are not solely an exchange of numbers. Rather, negotiators often surround their offers with explanations, accounts, and rationales that seek to justify, explain, and legitimize whatever terms they are proposing. However, surprisingly little scholarship has studied the role of these stories and the evidence that does exist seems inconclusive. In this dissertation, I examine *how, why, and when* the words we use in trying to explain and justify our positions work but also often fail to work in negotiations. In Chapter 2, I distinguish between two kinds of rationales buyers commonly employ—constraint rationales (referring to one’s own limited resources) and critique rationales (involving critiques of the negotiated object)—and demonstrate their divergent effects (Studies 1-4). In Chapter 3, I examine why buyers so often embrace the seemingly-flawed strategy of critique and seek evidence of whether perspective-taking might improve buyers’ ability to effectively offer critiques (Studies 5-7). In Chapter 4, I explore the role of attachment and its interaction with rationales, shedding light on previously unstudied dynamics between attachment and buyer accounts (Studies 8-10). I conclude by discussing the broader implications of these findings for understanding the dynamics of social exchange. Taken together, this research suggests that accounts and rationales matter, sometimes profoundly, and part of that is because of how they interact with a listener’s identity and attachment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

From formal negotiations to casual bargaining, from persuasive appeals to requests for help, social exchange often proceeds with one party proposing terms followed by their counterpart responding with an offer of their own. Over the past few decades, a tremendous amount of scholarship has examined numerical aspects of these offers and counteroffers, including the impact of their extremity and precision on settlement terms and impasses (e.g., Ames & Mason, 2015; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001; Mason, Lee, Wiley, & Ames, 2013; Neale & Northcraft, 1991; Schweinsberg, Ku, Wang, & Pillutla, 2012). The cumulative evidence is clear: numbers matter. What is far less clear is whether and how the stories and rationales accompanying these numbers might also matter. Practice-oriented guides to negotiation often encourage bargainers to employ rationales (e.g., Malhotra & Bazerman, 2007), yet some research finds that, for a variety of reasons, the justifications surrounding offers may not matter much (e.g., Friedland, 1983). Other studies have suggested that offer-makers' accounts tend to backfire, leading to worse outcomes than no rationale at all (e.g., Maaravi, Ganzach, & Pazy, 2011; Rubin, Brockner, Eckenrode, Enright, & Johnson-George, 1980). As a result, a number of important questions remain unanswered, including: When and why do negotiators' accounts and rationales hurt them? And can rationales ever yield benefits?

In this dissertation, I examine *how, why, and when* the words we use in trying to explain and justify our positions work but also often fail to work in social exchanges. I specifically focus on the context of negotiations, an important, rich, and useful context in which I am able to precisely examine the effect of rationales on economic and relational outcomes, controlling for numeric offers. Throughout the following chapters, I propose and find that rationales can matter,

sometimes a great deal. They can both help and hurt—and distinguishing between the content of rationales and understanding the recipient’s attachment is critical to recognizing their effects.

Rationales

I broadly define *rationales* as a speaker’s communication behavior (e.g., narratives, commentary) purporting to support, explain, and justify an act (i.e., a bargainer’s offer). This definition is in line with past scholarship in social psychological and organizational research on everyday account-giving (e.g., Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Sitkin and Bies, 1993) and more recent research on communication dynamics in negotiations (e.g., Loewenstein, Morris, Chakravarti, Thompson, & Kopelman, 2005; Maaravi, Ganzach, Pazy, 2011).

Given long-standing traditions of research on the efficacy of accounts and rationales in the justice literature and organizational scholarship, it may be tempting to draw similar conclusions in negotiations, assuming a positive impact of rationales on bargainer’s outcomes. However, surprisingly little scholarship has examined the role of rationales in negotiations and the evidence that does exist seems inconclusive. On the one hand, a number of negotiation scholars and educators highlight the benefits of adding rationales to first offers and requests (Lax & Sebenius, 2006; Malhotra & Bazerman, 2007). In a classic study, Langer, Blank & Chanowitz (1978) demonstrated the power of rationales in compliance, showing that one’s consent to a request (to cut in line to use a copying machine) significantly increased when the request was accompanied by a rationale, even when that rationale did not contain meaningful information (“May I use the Xerox machine because I have to make copies?”). Other research suggests that rationales might be dismissed by recipients as “cheap talk” (e.g., Crawford & Sobel, 1982; Farrell & Rabin, 1996) or non-credible “window dressing” (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1995). Pillutla and Murnighan (1995) found that adding fairness labels to offers in an ultimatum bargaining

context had little effect on the recipient's likelihood to accept those offers. Some research suggests that rationales may even backfire, leading to worse outcomes than not providing a rationale at all. For instance, Maaravi, Ganzach & Pazy (2011) posit that rationales can undermine, rather than improve, one's outcome in a negotiation when it is easy for the counterpart to generate counterarguments to those rationales.

The mixed evidence on the usefulness of rationales is potentially attributable to the lack of distinctions in rationale *content* (i.e., different kinds of arguments or justifications) in past work, making the precise impact of different rationales unclear. To gain a general understanding of the ubiquity and variety of rationales, I conducted a pilot study in which I explored the extent to which different types of rationales were used. Specifically, I asked four hundred recent negotiators, including both buyers and sellers, about their most recent meaningful real-world negotiation, including the buyer rationales that were most commonly employed in those negotiations. It is worth noting that I focused specifically on buyer rationales as a starting point to this program of research but expect the implications to generalize across both buyer and seller rationales.

Overall, this pilot work revealed five rationales that were most heavily employed by buyers (the percentage indicates those that reported at least some usage of the rationale): *critiques* (highlighted the flaws or shortcomings of the object; 74%), *constraints* (highlighted buyer's own financial or situational limitations; 72%), *alternatives* (highlighted alternative offers from other sellers, 71%) *comparables* (used other objects or transactions as a comparison; 70%), and *seller benefit* (emphasized how seller would benefit from transaction; 68%). These results, although informal, suggests variance in the different types of rationales that buyers use in negotiations ranging from highlighting a focal item's shortcomings to emphasizing a seller's

benefits. It seems likely that these different kinds of rationales might have different effects.

Accordingly, to gain traction on how rationales operate and the impact they have, research may benefit by making commitments to particular distinctions or contrasts in the content of rationales.

Roadmap

In the following chapters, I distinguish between meaningfully different buyer rationales to provide a more systematic understanding of rationales and the effect they have on negotiations. In Chapter 2, I focus on a distinction between two commonly-used buyer rationales: *critique rationales*, which revolve around the quality and shortcomings of what the seller is offering, and *constraint rationales*, which refer to limitations in a buyer's own situation (Studies 1-4). I propose that buyers' critique rationales, despite their more-frequent usage, may provoke reactance and resistance in sellers, especially when they are taken as uninformative attacks. Constraint rationales, in contrast, may yield benefits for buyers by signaling a buyer's limit while cultivating a positive image of the buyer.

In Chapter 3, I take a deeper dive into understanding why buyers so often embrace the popular yet seemingly-flawed strategy of critique and explore an intervention to mitigate critique backlash (Studies 5-7). I propose that buyers substantially underestimate how likely sellers are to see their critique as an unwarranted and unfair "cheap shot," assuming instead that they would be seen as reasonable critiques. I further test whether counseling buyers to actively take the sellers' perspective while crafting a critique rationale leads to sellers being less likely to see those messages as cheap shots

In Chapter 4, I explore the role of attachment by tracing how the accounts people provide, and how their reactions to others' overtures, can be dramatically affected by their relationship and history with an object (Studies 8-10). I propose that the impact of rationales will

largely depend on the degree of attachment sellers feel to the object under negotiation. I predict that when sellers are at least moderately attached to the object under negotiation, they will show a defensive reaction to buyer rationales that critique the object (*critique backlash effect*). In contrast, I expect attached sellers to favor buyers who offer to take good care of, or praise, their object, even when doing so sacrifices economic value for the seller (*caretaker advantage effect*). Taken together, this work suggests that accounts and rationales matter, sometimes profoundly, and part of that is because of how they validate or threaten the listener's appraisal of the object in play.

Chapter 2: *How Different Rationales Matter*

Past research paints a mixed picture of rationales in negotiations: Some findings suggest rationales might help, whereas others suggest they may have little effect or backfire. I believe one reason for these seemingly divergent results in past work on the efficacy of rationales is that scholars have not fully distinguished between different *kinds* of rationales. In this chapter, I embrace a distinction between two particular rationales that I show are commonly employed by buyers in negotiations: *constraint* rationales, which focus on limitations in a buyer's own situation (e.g., "I don't have the resources to offer more"), and *critique* rationales, which focus on the quality and shortcomings of what the seller is offering (e.g., "What you're selling isn't worth any more"). I argue that critique rationales, despite their widespread use, often backfire whereas constraint rationales often yield some benefits. I also consider whether this difference is due to an information value mechanism, which suggests that the divergence might flow from sellers typically taking constraint rationales, but not critique rationales, as a signal of the buyer's limit. I explore a boundary related to this mechanism by manipulating how much background information sellers have, gauging whether sellers are more swayed by critique rationales when they are relatively uninformed.

This research has potential practical implications. If my predictions are supported, the results would suggest that negotiators should think twice before using a very common tactic (critique). This research also has the potential to advance scholarship on negotiation and social exchange more generally. If my account is borne out, my evidence would combine with other emerging work on account-giving and framing (e.g., Bhatia, Chow, & Weingart, 2019; Bowles & Babcock, 2013; Trötschel, Loschelder, Höhne, & Majer, 2015) to invite scholars to look beyond how much people ask for and shed new light on how they ask for it.

Why These Rationales?

My argument and evidence revolve around two kinds of rationale content buyers may employ: critique and constraint. In the sections that follow, I define and describe these constructs in more detail, but I begin with a few general points about my motivation for using these constructs in this research. I am not attempting to provide an exhaustive taxonomy of rationale content. Buyers certainly use other kinds of rationales—and sellers clearly employ their own arguments as well. My emphasis on these two kinds of buyer rationales comes in part from my own experience observing negotiations and teaching developing negotiators, which indicates to me that these rationales are not only commonly-used but often have divergent effects. I also note that these rationales parallel a distinction in the account-giving literature between justifications and excuses, something I describe further in the sections that follow (cf Shaw, Wild, & Colquitt, 2003). My hope is that the argument and evidence I offer here will encourage scholars to (a) see this particular comparison between critique and constraint rationales as meaningful and worthwhile, (b) draw on the account-giving literature and work in other relevant areas to deepen our understanding of negotiation dynamics, and (c) go further in identifying other kinds of rationale content and how they play out in negotiations.

Critique Rationales

Critique is a frequently-used bargaining tactic in which a buyer criticizes an object¹ under negotiation or highlight its shortcomings (e.g., "This car has a dent and lacks a sunroof ...") to justify their devaluation of a seller's offer (e.g., "...thus, the car is not worth as much as you are asking for."). This kind of proposition is similar to justifications as studied in the account-giving

¹ I used the shorthand "object" to refer to whatever a seller may be offering in a negotiation, but my claims are not restricted to situations where the negotiation is over a physical object. Indeed, in Study 3, I focus on a situation where a seller is offering a service.

literature. In that tradition of work, scholars often define justifications as explanations that seek to challenge and alter the audience's assessment of an act or situation, in part by minimizing the act or situation's importance and by framing behaviors and outcomes as normal or expected under the circumstances (e.g., Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Shaw et al., 2003; Sitkin & Bies, 1993). In a negotiation context, a buyer's markedly lower counteroffer in the wake of a seller's proposal could be seen as an affront or inappropriate. However, a buyer could attempt to justify this by challenging the seller's evaluation and claiming that their counteroffer is appropriate given the worth of the object under negotiation.

Critique rationales appear to be very commonly used by buyers in negotiations. In one recent study of real-world negotiations, some 60 percent of those who self-identified as buyers indicated that they used critique in pursuit of a better deal (Ames & Wazlawek, 2014; Study 2). In my own work, I have videotaped developing professionals engaged in roleplay negotiations, coding the videos for use of critique rationales (Figure 1; see Study 1 for details). My coding revealed that over 95 percent of buyers used critique, with the majority of buyers engaging in critique multiple times during the exchange.

If such sizable shares of negotiators use critique rationales, perhaps these accounts are often effective. One route through which they could have a benefit is by disambiguating the value of the object for the seller. Bargainers often have incomplete information and seek to better understand the plausible value of objects under negotiation. It is possible that a buyer's critique of an object could cause the seller to recognize the object's shortcomings and reappraise the object's value downward, a kind of learning effect.

Having acknowledged reasons why critique could yield benefits, I turn to what I see as even more compelling reasons to expect that critique may often do more harm than good. First, I

see sellers as unlikely to "learn" from buyers' critiques. Individuals often recognize situations in which a counterpart is attempting to influence or manipulate them (Friestad & Wright, 1994). If a seller thinks that a buyer is trying to secure attractive deal terms by explicitly critiquing an object under negotiation, they might dismiss or even resent these arguments and react defensively by making more aggressive counteroffers. This reaction may be strongest when sellers have some amount of independent information (e.g., about the worth of the object under negotiation, about comparables, etc.), and thus, confidence in their valuation of the object.

In sum, while there may be reasons to think that critique rationales could yield benefits for the many buyers who use them, my experience in observing negotiations and teaching developing negotiators leads me to expect that critique rationales often run risks of damaging both instrumental and relationship outcomes.

Constraint Rationales

Constraint rationales explain a buyer's inability to meet the seller's offer (e.g., "I cannot pay the price you are asking for the car ...") in terms of the buyer's limitations or bounded resources that are outside of their control (e.g., "... because my budget is strictly limited by my insurance payout"). This kind of proposition is similar to excuses as studied in the accounting literature. In that tradition of work, scholars often define excuses as explanations in which a person admits that an act is harmful or counter-normative in some fashion but denies full responsibility for it (e.g., Shaw et al., 2003). Whereas someone offering a justification indicates they "should not" have done otherwise, someone offering an excuse indicates they "could not" have done otherwise. In a negotiation context, a buyer may acknowledge that their markedly ungenerous counteroffer to a seller is lower than appropriate but excuse their proposal by claiming to have limited resources (e.g., "You deserve more but this is all I can offer").

Like critiques, constraint rationales appear to be widely used. In my coding of roleplay negotiations, some 90 percent of buyers used constraint rationales (Figure 1). It is worth noting, though, that constraint rationales were employed less frequently (an average of roughly twice per negotiation) than critique rationales (roughly five times per negotiation).

There are several reasons to think that constraint rationales might be effective. A first is that constraints likely function as excuses—and past work suggests that excuses can be quite effective (e.g., Shaw et al., 2003) and that face-affirming overtures such as excuses increase the likelihood of joint resolution in interpersonal disputes (e.g., Brett, Olekalns, Friedman, Goates, Anderson, & Lisco, 2007). One reason behind such effects could be that excuse-making moves the apparent causal source from the excuse-maker to other factors (Snyder & Higgins, 1988). Thus, a buyer's constraint rationale could simultaneously mitigate a seller's feelings of threat (e.g., "My object and I are not under attack") and negative attributions about the buyer (e.g., "This ungenerous buyer is not necessarily a jerk"). Past research suggests that recipients of assertive offers in negotiations tend to ascribe the behavior to negative personal qualities of the offer-maker (Morris, Larrick, & Su, 1999); constraint rationales could provide an alternative situational attribution (i.e., the buyer could not have done otherwise because of their constraints).

Constraint rationales may work largely by being taken by sellers as a meaningful signal of a buyer's reservation price or limit. Negotiators are often eager to diagnose a counterpart's limits in order to choose their approach and evaluate their outcomes (e.g., Larrick & Wu, 2007; Raiffa, 1982). A seller might attend to a buyer's account of their constraints in judging the most the buyer could pay. It may be that a constraint rationale ("I can't pay any more") is often taken as signal of a buyer's limit whereas a critique rationale ("It's not worth any more") is generally not treated as revealing a strict limit.

My own experience leads me to expect that constraint rationales might yield benefits for the reasons noted above. However, it is worth acknowledging alternative points of view. As noted earlier, people may become wary of information offered by a potentially-manipulative counterpart (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Sellers might dismiss buyers' claims about bounded resources as cheap talk or meaningless. Indeed, one study (Rubin et al., 1980) examined a "my hands are tied" rationale in bargaining, finding that counterparts made less generous offers to agents claiming that their own principals limited their ability to concede. The authors speculated that these rationales might not have been seen as credible or legitimate by counterparts. While I think constraint rationales often do yield benefits, I agree that factors such as credibility likely function as moderators.

Predictions and Plan of Study

Following the logic described above, I believe that two kinds of rationales frequently employed by buyers in negotiations will have divergent effects. Specifically, my central prediction is that, for buyers, critique rationales will yield worse instrumental outcomes (i.e., less generous counteroffers and less valuable settlements from seller counterparts) and worse relationship outcomes (i.e., less positive impressions of them by seller counterparts) than constraint rationales.

I see this gap as due in part to an information value mechanism, with sellers typically attaching different diagnostic value to these rationales. For constraint rationales, I expect sellers will often take buyer's limitations as a meaningful signal of the buyer's reservation price or limit. In contrast, I expect sellers will often treat critique rationales as not diagnostic of a buyer's limit, dismissing it as a (potentially obnoxious) persuasive gambit. Importantly, I also anticipate a boundary to this later effect. When a seller is especially uninformed about the object they are

offering, they may be more amenable to a buyer's critique rationale. In such a case, when a seller is unsure of their object's worth (e.g., market rates, appraisals, etc.), they may rely more on buyer critiques as a source of valid information about the object and the buyer's true limits. Indeed, for these reasons, I think it is possible that when a seller is seriously uninformed, critique rationales might have an advantage over constraint rationales.

I tested these ideas in four studies. Study 1 examined spontaneous rationales in zero-sum dyadic negotiation roleplays to test the effect of constraint and critique rationales. Study 2 sought to clarify causal effects by controlling the presentation of constraint and critique rationales to respondents in a scenario study. Study 3 blended experimental control and dyadic interaction in a yoked design, counseling buyer participants to offer constraint or critique rationales for their proposals and then gauging how seller participants responded. Study 4 explored whether market information functioned as a boundary, manipulating sellers' knowledge of the value of their negotiated object and examining their reactions to buyers' critique and constraint rationales.

Along with testing my central prediction (that critique rationales generally fare worse than constraint rationales) and my boundary expectation (that this gap will be diminished or even reversed when sellers have limited information about the value of their object), I also pursued exploratory analyses to gauge whether sellers' expectations of buyers' limits played a mediating role. If constraint rationales (versus critique rationales) lead sellers to assume that buyers have lower limits, such an information value effect might explain part or all of the impact of these rationales on counteroffers and settlements. All four of these studies provided opportunities to gauge such effects.

Study 1

To gauge the impact of constraint and critique rationale usage on instrumental outcomes (i.e., deal terms), I analyzed video recordings of dyadic roleplay negotiations conducted between developing professionals. I expected that the spontaneous use of constraint and critique rationales would have divergent effects. Specifically, I expected that buyers' constraint rationale usage would be associated with better deal terms (i.e., lower final prices). I expected that critique rationales would not be associated with such benefits and, indeed, that they might be associated with worse outcomes.

Method

Participants and design. Participants included 162 Master's of Business Administration (MBA) students enrolled in negotiation courses at a U.S. business school (62 females; $M_{age} = 28.32$, $SD_{age} = 2.04$). In the course's second session, students were randomly paired and assigned to the buyer or seller role in a negotiation involving licensing fees for a graphic novel. Sellers represented the family that owned the graphic novel, negotiating the novel's licensing fee with a production company, the buyer, who was interested in licensing the rights to develop a feature film around the novel's story. Sellers were told that the family would not sell the novel's licensing rights for less than \$1.5 million (i.e., seller's reservation price), and the buyers could not spend more than \$2.25 million for the licensing rights (i.e., buyer's reservation price). This was a distributive negotiation; the only issue being negotiated was price. Negotiations, which typically lasted 10-15 minutes, were videotaped.

Materials and procedure. My past experience and an initial review of videotaped negotiations suggested that critique and constraint rationales were the most salient and commonly-used rationales by buyers in negotiations. I recruited two independent research

assistants, blind to the hypotheses, to code buyers' usage of critique and constraint rationales in each videotaped negotiation.

I coded rationale usage at two levels. At a general level, the coders indicated the overall degree of *emphasis* the buyer placed on constraint and critique rationales throughout the negotiation—that is, how much the buyer relied on those kinds of accounts in making their argument for a lower final price. After reviewing an entire negotiation, coders rated constraint emphasis and critique emphasis separately on scales ranging from 1 = *weak emphasis* to 3 = *strong emphasis*. In order for coders to have a basis for judgment, they first watched multiple negotiation videos before beginning coding, giving them a sense for relative emphasis of constraint and critique rationales across the sample population.

At a more granular level, the coders recorded the *frequency* with which each rationale was used. More specifically, separate conversational turns featuring constraint or critique accounts were considered unique counts towards the frequency of their corresponding rationales. If multiple continuous statements were making one large account, they were counted as a single occurrence. For instance, some buyers made a number of statements (e.g., the novel has a childish storyline, the novel is only popular among pre-teen boys) to make a comprehensive account about the lacking quality of the seller's object (e.g., the novel is not marketable to a broad age-group). In such instances, all continuous statements were counted towards a single critique rationale. In other cases, in which buyers made independent statements for unrelated accounts, each separate statement counted as a unique rationale.

Along with the coding of rationales from negotiation videos, I considered two additional measures: final settlement values (when a deal was reached) and sellers' assumptions about their

buyer counterparts' limits ("What do you think your counterpart's reservation price is?") as captured in a post-negotiation survey.

Results

Rationale coding. I assessed interrater reliability for the emphasis measures by computing the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC, McGraw & Wong, 1996; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). The ratings of the two coders demonstrated substantial agreement both for the emphasis of constraint rationales, $ICC(2, 2) = .89$ and emphasis of critique rationales, $ICC(2, 2) = .85$. I averaged the ratings to form a composite measure of emphasis for each rationale (constraint emphasis: $M = 1.30$, $SD = .85$; critique emphasis: $M = 2.00$, $SD = .80$).

The two coders also showed substantial agreement on their assessment of frequencies, producing interrater reliability correlations of $r = .74$ for frequency of constraint rationales, and $r = .76$ for frequency of critique rationales. I averaged coders' evaluations to create aggregate measures (constraint frequency: $M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.69$; critique frequency: $M = 5.31$, $SD = 3.20$; Chatman, Boisnier, Spataro, Anderson, & Berdahl, 2008).

The correlation between the emphasis and frequency measures within each rationale was positive and significant (constraint rationales: $r = .84$, $p < .001$; critique rationales: $r = .72$, $p < .001$). Given the high correlations, I created a composite measure of rationale *usage*, combining the emphasis and frequency measures of each rationale. This composite usage measure was applied in all subsequent analyses². Critique rationale usage was not significantly correlated with constraint rationale usage, either in terms of frequency ($r = .12$, $p = .28$) or emphasis ($r = .043$, $p = .70$).

² All reported results replicate when applying the emphasis and frequency measures separately for each rationale. I am ready to share these results upon request.

As previewed in the introduction, both types of rationales were used with considerable frequency (Figure 1). Buyers used critique rationales significantly more frequently ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 3.20$) than constraint rationales ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.69$), $t(80) = 7.46$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.11$. Buyers also emphasized critique rationales ($M = 2.00$, $SD = .80$) significantly more than constraint rationales ($M = 1.30$, $SD = .85$), $t(80) = 5.445$, $p < .001$, $d = .85$.

Seventy of the 81 dyads reached a deal (86%), whereas 11 dyads concluded the negotiation without an agreement (i.e., impasse)³. Of the seventy dyads that reached a deal, two dyads were excluded from subsequent analyses for failing to comply with instructions (i.e., reached a deal outside of the \$1.5 million to \$2.25 million bargaining zone).

Instrumental outcomes. I tested my central prediction about the effect of rationales on deal terms by examining the simultaneous effects of constraint and critique rationales. I expected that more emphasis on constraint rationales would benefit buyers (i.e., lead to lower settlement values) whereas this would not be true for critique rationales. In a multiple regression model using the composite usage measure, I found that, indeed, usage of constraint rationales was negatively related to deal value ($\beta = -.31$, $p = .009$; i.e., more favorable to buyers) whereas usage of critique rationales was not significantly predictive ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .17$).

I also examined sellers' estimates of buyers' reservation prices. In a multiple regression using the composite usage measure, I found that usage of constraint rationales was negatively related to estimated reservation prices ($\beta = -.25$, $p = .045$) whereas usage of critique rationales was not significantly predictive ($\beta = -.15$, $p = .22$).

³ A series of binary logistic regressions with the likelihood of impasse as the dependent variable suggest the possibility of a stronger relationship between buyers' usage of critique rationales and the likelihood of impasse (composite: $b = .035$, $SE = .029$, Wald $z = 1.44$, $p = .23$; emphasis: $b = .54$, $SE = .44$, Wald $z = 1.47$, $p = .23$; frequency: $b = .13$, $SE = .093$, Wald $z = 1.84$, $p = .18$) compared to that of constraint rationales and impasse (composite: $b = .005$, $SE = .070$, Wald $z = .005$, $p = .95$; emphasis: $b = .094$, $SE = .38$, Wald $z = .062$, $p = .80$; frequency: $b = .052$, $SE = .19$, Wald $z = .074$, $p = .79$), though neither rationale reached statistical significance.

Mediation. I pursued mediation analyses to explore potential information value effects, namely that the link between constraint rationales and final deal value could be at least partly accounted for by sellers' expectations about buyers' reservation prices. Following the recommendations outlined by Hayes (2013), I computed the indirect effect using bias-corrected bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples (bootstrapping provides evidence of mediation if the bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) does not include zero for indirect effects). Results showed that sellers' assumptions of buyers' reservation prices significantly mediated the effect of buyers' constraint rationale usage on settlement values (*indirect effect* = -4,851.60, *SE* = 2,513.20, 95% CI [-11,216.97, -1,082.78]).

Discussion

Analyses of over 80 videotaped negotiations showed that, as expected, constraint and critique rationales had divergent effects on deal value. Specifically, constraint rationales were associated with better deal values for buyers whereas critique rationales were not. A similar pattern emerged for sellers' assumptions about buyers' reservation prices (i.e., greater constraint rationale usage led to lower seller estimates of buyers' limits). While I did not find evidence that critique was associated with worse deal terms, I did observe a substantial divergence between critique and constraint rationales associations with outcomes.

Mediation analyses revealed that the positive impact of constraint rationales on deal value for buyers was partly accounted for by sellers' assumptions about buyers' reservation prices. This is consistent with an information value mechanism (i.e., sellers take buyers' constraint rationales, but not critique ones, as meaningful signals of their limits).

Study 2

Study 1 gauged how buyers' spontaneous use of constraint and critique rationales affected negotiation outcomes. Although Study 1 provided initial support for my hypothesis that constraint rationales have more benefits than critique ones for buyers in negotiations, the correlational results leave causality unresolved. It could be, for instance, that critique is provoked by (rather than the cause of) faring poorly in a negotiation. To address causality, Study 2 employed negotiation scenarios, holding buyer offer behavior (i.e., amount) constant while manipulating rationale content. I expected that seller respondents in Study 2 would be more accommodating to buyers offering constraint rationales than to buyers offering critique rationales. Study 2 also allowed me to gauge relational outcomes.

Method

Participants and design. To determine adequately-powered sample sizes for Study 2 and all of the subsequent experiments, I conducted sample size analyses using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). Using the G*Power 3 software, I determined that I needed a sample of at least 180 for this study to attain adequate power ($1 - \beta > 0.80$). Data collection was halted after the minimum sample was obtained. A total of 185 U.S. participants responded to an online survey for payment through Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform. Eleven of these participants provided incomplete responses, failed at least one of two attention check questions (e.g., with instructions to select the left-most option on a scale), or provided values inconsistent with understanding the survey materials (e.g., making a counteroffer that was higher than the price they originally listed the antique desk for). This left 174 U.S. adults in the final sample (90 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 34.7$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.2$). The experiment had a single between-participants factor (rationale type: critique, constraint, control).

Materials and procedure. After reviewing informed consent materials, participants were asked to imagine themselves engaged in an online negotiation, attempting to sell an antique desk to a potential buyer. A picture of an antique desk was displayed. All participants were in a seller role, responding to offers made by a buyer counterpart. The scenario described that the seller was fond of the desk and had owned it for several years. However, the seller was moving to a smaller home with insufficient space for the desk and, after careful thought, decided to sell the desk. The scenario concluded with the seller listing their desk for \$750 based on researching the prices of similar antique desks.

After reading the scenario, participants were instructed to write an advertisement for their antique desk. Once participants submitted their advertisements, they received a response from a (hypothetical) buyer. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three buyer rationale conditions. The critique rationale featured criticisms of the table (“The color of the finish seems washed out in places and there appear to be some scratches on the legs. ...there are better quality tables that sell for less”). The constraint rationale referred to the buyer’s situation and limits (“I am currently between jobs and have a very limited budget. ... the price you are asking is above the limit of what I can afford”). The control rationale featured minimal and neutral text (“I am interested in your antique desk”). In all cases, the buyer’s counteroffer was held constant at \$500.

Participants were then asked to respond to the buyer’s message and indicate their counteroffer (“What price proposal would you make in response to your counterpart’s offer of \$500?”), their assumption of their counterpart’s reservation price (“What do you think is the highest price your counterpart can pay?”), and their predicted settlement price (“If you reached a settlement with this person, what price do you think you would end up with?”). I also gauged participants’ impressions of buyers, capturing judgments relevant to a bargaining context.

Participants rated buyers on six pairs of adjectives ("stubborn, demanding," "aggressive, competitive," "helpful, considerate," "sneaky, devious," "trustworthy, cooperative," and "selfish, cold") on a seven-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*.

Results

Instrumental outcomes. My key comparison of interest was the difference in participants' reactions to constraint and critique rationales. I found support for my predictions about assumed reservation prices (Table 1): Participants who received constraint rationales assumed their buyer counterparts had significantly lower reservation prices than participants who received critique rationales and those in the control condition (i.e., no rationales). Assumed reservation prices among those who received critique rationales and no rationales were not significantly different from one another. My results were also consistent with my predictions about counteroffers (Table 1). Participants who received constraint rationales made more conciliatory counteroffers to their buyers compared to those responding to critique rationales and to no rationales. Counteroffers among those who received critique rationales and no rationales were not significantly different from one another. Anticipated settlement values did not show significant differences across conditions, though the pattern of means was in the expected direction (see Table 1).

Mediation. As in Study 1, I explored the potential mediating role of sellers' assumptions about buyers' reservation prices in accounting for the link between rationale type and instrumental outcomes. I focused on the two conditions relevant to my question (dummy coding for constraint versus critique rationales) with counteroffers as the dependent variable (I did not examine anticipated settlements because this variable was not significantly related to the rationale variable). A bootstrap analysis with 5,000 resamples (Hayes, 2013; Preacher & Hayes,

2004) revealed that the seller's assumption of buyer resistance price mediated the effect of the type of rationale on the seller's counteroffer (*indirect effect* = -8.43, *SE* = 4.46, 95% CI [-19.60, -1.77]).

Relational outcomes. Consistent with my expectations, participants (sellers) who received constraint rationales felt more positively about their buyer counterparts than participants who received critique rationales (all *p*'s <.001 except 'sneaky, devious', *p* = .070; see Table 1). Further, critique rationales appeared to carry relational costs compared to no rationales. Specifically, participants who received critique rationales generally felt less positively and more negatively toward their counterpart compared to those who received no rationales (all *p*'s <.03). Perceived impressions did not differ between those who received constraint rationales and no rationales (all *p*'s > .08).

Discussion

Study 2 manipulated buyers' rationale content while holding offer amount constant in a hypothetical negotiation. The results were consistent with my expectation that constraint rationales, compared to critique rationales, would evoke more accommodating and positive responses from rationale-recipients (i.e., sellers). Buyers giving constraint rationales, compared to critique rationales, elicited more generous counteroffers from their seller counterparts. Their seller counterparts also assumed these buyer counterparts had lower limits. Further, buyers offering constraint rationales, compared to critique rationales, were seen more positively (e.g., trustworthy) and less negatively (e.g., aggressive) by their seller counterparts. Study 2 also provided evidence in support of an information value mechanism: sellers' assumptions about counterpart limits accounted for the link between rationale and counteroffers. This suggests that

one reason constraint rationales may fare better than critique ones is because they are taken as valid signals of reservation prices.

One possible concern regarding Study 2 is the potential confound in my manipulation of critique rationale (“The color of the finish seems washed out in places and there appear to be some scratches on the legs. ...there are better quality tables that sell for less”). Specifically, it is possible that the latter part of the manipulation, which touches on the *relative* quality of the object, might be at odds with the former part of the manipulation, which focuses on the *absolute* quality of the object. While I see both relative and absolute critiques to fall under my definition of critique rationales—as critiques that highlight the shortcomings of the object under negotiation—I wanted to ensure that my manipulation in Study 2 was not confounding one type of critique with another. I address this issue in Study 4, where I operationalized the critique rationale to solely focus on the absolute quality of the object under negotiation.

Study 3

Study 2 clarified the potential causal effect of constraint and critique rationales on instrumental and relational outcomes. However, an alternative possibility is that I (unintentionally) crafted a weak and unrepresentative argument for the critique rationale condition and an especially strong one for the constraint rationale condition. While I sought to create reasonable and representative exemplars of each kind of rationale – based, in part, on my experience in Study 1 – I sought to address this issue in Study 3. I asked one sample of participants to generate offers in a buyer role in a hypothetical negotiation and another yoked sample of participants to evaluate and respond to those offers in a seller role. I controlled buyers’ offer amount but guided some buyers to craft constraint rationales and others to create critique rationales. A third (control) condition let buyers describe their offer in any way they wanted. In

pursuit of generalizability, I also shifted the context from an object-oriented negotiation to a service-oriented negotiation. My central prediction was that critique rationales would evoke worse instrumental and relational outcomes than constraint rationales.

Method

Participants and design. There were two phases in this study: the Buyer Offer Phase and Seller Response Phase. In the Buyer Offer Phase, one sample of participants adopted the role of a buyer, reading a scenario in which they were seeking interior design services and writing an offer to a potential seller (i.e., an interior designer). Buyers were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: some were asked to offer constraint rationales, others to offer critique rationales, and a third (control) group was given no specific instructions. In the Seller Response Phase, a separate group of participants was asked to imagine themselves in the seller role in the hypothetical scenario (there was only a single seller condition). These sellers were yoked to participants from the first phase, randomly assigned to read an offer from a buyer.

I determined that I needed a sample of at least 160 for the Buyer Offer Phase to provide adequate power ($1 - \beta > .80$). A total of 164 U.S. adults participated in the Buyer Offer Phase through Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform (85 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 33.8$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.5$). The experimenter and a research assistant blind to the hypothesis (a separate individual from Study 1), read through the 164 responses and selected 40 responses per condition (120 responses total for all three conditions) that implemented the specific rationales as instructed (e.g., setting aside cases where a critique rationale was made when the buyer participant was asked to make a constraint rationale). In the control condition, in which I provided no explicit instructions regarding rationales, I excluded participants who failed to pass the attention check (e.g., instructions to select the left-most option on a scale). Some control cases featured critique

rationales, others featured constraints, and yet others featured neither or some combination of the two. I regard this spontaneous mix as a meaningful benchmark for comparing the other conditions.

In the Seller Response Phase, a total of 122 U.S. adults recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform responded to a randomly selected buyer message from the Buyer Offer Phase. Using the same attention and comprehension checks as in Study 2, 14 participants were excluded from subsequent analyses. This left 108 individuals in the sample (64 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 34.5$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.0$). The experiment had a single between-participants factor (buyer rationale type: critique, constraint, control).

Materials and procedure: Buyer offer phase. After reviewing informed consent materials, participants read a scenario about an interior design negotiation. All participants in the Buyer Offer Phase played the buyer role as the owner of a cafe in need of an interior makeover, in discussions with a potential designer (i.e., seller). The scenario described the seller making an initial estimate of \$20,000 for the entire project in response to the buyer's inquiry. Buyers read that they had a financial constraint of \$16,000, which included the budget they set aside to pay their employees during the time the cafe is closed for renovation. Spending any more than \$16,000 would force the buyer to cut back on their employees' wages, which would put a great strain on their financial situation. The scenario described the seller's work as of mixed quality: The seller had won a few rewards in the past, but their more recent designs have been tacky and untrendy. The buyers heard a disappointing review from the seller's recent customer, further confirming the buyer's view that the seller's designs are outdated.

After reading the scenario, participants were instructed to respond to the seller's initial estimate of \$20,000. Participants in the constraint rationale condition were encouraged to focus

on their own budgetary constraints when formulating their response (“... focus on how your personal constraint in this scenario is affecting your counteroffer amount. ... Try to convince the seller that you are currently in a difficult situation due to these constraints.”). Participants in the critique rationale condition were asked to focus on the mixed quality of the seller’s past work (“... focus on how the quality of the company’s designs is affecting your counteroffer amount ... by elaborating on why you don’t think the designs are worth as much as the designer claims ...”). Participants in the control condition were not given any special guidance.

Materials and procedure: Seller response phase. Participants in the Seller Response Phase were asked to assume the seller role in the hypothetical interior design negotiation as the head designer and founder of a small interior design firm. The scenario described that the seller had responded to an inquiry from the owner of the cafe (i.e., buyer), with an estimate of \$20,000. Seller participants were then randomly assigned to read a real response from a participant in one of the three conditions from the Buyer Offer Phase (constraint, critique, control). While I preserved the entire original text of buyer offers, we held the offer amount constant at \$16,000 in all buyer responses.

Sellers then responded to the buyer’s message and indicated their counteroffer. They recorded their assumption of their counterpart’s reservation price and their predicted settlement price, as measured in Study 2. Sellers also indicated the likelihood of an impasse (i.e., that the negotiation would end without a deal) and the likelihood that they would recommend the buyer counterpart to a friend on a seven-point Likert scale (from 1 = *not at all likely* to 7 = *very likely*). I also measured impressions using the same items as Study 2.

Results

Instrumental outcomes. As in Study 2, my key comparison of interest was the difference in participants' reactions to constraint and critique rationales. I found support for my predictions about all four of the instrumental outcome variables (Table 2). Constraint rationales, compared to critique ones, were associated with more accommodating assumptions about reservation prices, more accommodating counteroffers, more accommodating anticipated settlement values, and lower expected rates of impasse. Moreover, for each of these variables, critique rationales fared worse than the control condition. Constraint rationales fared better than control in terms of expected impasse rate but did not differ significantly for the other three instrumental variables.

Mediation. As in Studies 1 and 2, I explored the potential mediating role of sellers' assumptions about buyers' reservation prices in accounting for the link between rationale type and instrumental outcomes. I focused on the two conditions relevant to my question (dummy coding for constraint versus critique rationales) and two dependent variables (counteroffers and anticipated settlements). Two bootstrap analyses with 5,000 resamples (Hayes, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2004) revealed that the seller's assumption of buyer reservation prices significantly mediated the impact of the type of rationale on both the seller's counteroffer (*indirect effect* = -579.53, *SE* = 223.01, 95% CI [-1,107.46, -211.41]), and the seller's estimation of the settlement price (*indirect effect* = -550.75, *SE* = 212.91, 95% CI [-1,041.54, -197.68]).

Relational outcomes. As expected, sellers who received constraint rationales felt far more positively and far less negatively about their buyer counterparts than participants who received critique rationales (Table 2). Moreover, both of these conditions differed significantly from the control condition: Buyers in the critique condition were seen more negatively than those in the control condition whereas buyers in the constraint condition were seen more positively

than those in the control condition. The recommendation variable (i.e., recommend to a friend) paralleled these impression results (Table 2).

Discussion

Study 3 extended my previous findings by having one sample of participants generate constraint and critique rationales (as well as control offers) as buyers in a hypothetical negotiation and another sample of participants react to those offers as sellers in the same scenario. The results from Study 3 were consistent with my expectation that, for buyers, constraint rationales, compared to critique rationales, would evoke more accommodating and positive responses from rationale-recipients (i.e., sellers). Buyers giving constraint rationales, compared to critique rationales, elicited more generous counteroffers from their seller counterparts. Their counterparts also assumed these buyers had lower limits and expected to reach deals that were more attractive for the buyers. Further, buyers offering constraint rationales, compared to critique rationales, were seen more positively (e.g., trustworthy) and less negatively (e.g., aggressive) by their seller counterparts. These relational outcomes also departed significantly from the control condition: Buyers offering critique rationales were seen more negatively than those in the control condition whereas buyers offering constraint rationales were seen more positively than those in the control condition.

Study 3 also provided additional evidence in support of an information value mechanism, suggesting that one explanation for why constraint rationales may fare better than critique ones is because they are often taken as credible signals of reservation prices.

It is worth noting the separate takeaways from the different operationalization of control conditions in Study 2 and Study 3. In Study 2, sellers in the control condition received no rationales from the buyer, whereas in Study 3, sellers in the control condition received a rationale

freely drafted by the buyer without any guidance on content. One reason I included these control conditions was to evaluate the larger question of whether rationales matter. In Study 2, with a no-rationale control condition, I see evidence that constraint rationales differ from control in terms of instrumental outcomes and that critique rationales differ from control in terms of relational outcomes. This leads me to conclude that these rationales are doing “something” other than being simply dismissed or overlooked. Put another way, both rationale conditions differ from having no rationale at all. Study 3 featured an unguided-rationale control condition. Here, the contrast between this control and the constraint/critique conditions is tantamount to saying “what happens when people are counseled to give a particular type of account rather than receive no guidance at all.” This could be seen as a test of an intervention or advice. Here, critique advice leads to worse instrumental and relational outcomes (vs. no advice) whereas constraint advice leads to better relational outcomes (vs. no advice). In sum, the overall picture that emerges from these contrasts with control conditions is that “these rationales do matter compared to no rationale” and that “advice to use one rationale or another matters compared to no advice.”

Study 4

Studies 1 through 3 generally supported my expectation that buyers often achieve worse instrumental and relational outcomes with critique compared to constraint rationales. I further found sellers to take constraint rationales as a meaningful signal of a buyer’s limit, whereas they do not treat critique rationales as diagnostic of a buyer’s limit, leading to backlash. In Study 4, I sought to better understand the process through which critique rationales operate and examine contexts in which they may be taken as holding informational value, rather than dismissed as a persuasive gambit. Notably, across all three studies, sellers had a reasonable amount of information about the value of the good they were negotiating over. For instance, in Study 2,

seller participants were given information in their scenario that alluded to them having arrived at their offer price after researching the market for other antique desks (“...After researching the prices of other antique desks, you decide that you are going to list your table at \$750.”).

Similarly, in Study 3, sellers were told that their offers were competitive to other similar services (“...you responded to Pierre’s with an estimate of \$20,000, which you believe is a reasonable price based on comparable projects you’ve worked on in the past.”).

When sellers have some sense of the market value of the object under negotiation (a material thing, a service, etc.) – such as the scenarios provided in the first three studies – they may not take a critique rationale as diagnostic of the object’s quality and value but rather as a gambit or an attack. This may, in turn, lead the seller to display defensive reactions such as making more aggressive counteroffers and adopting a markedly negative view of the buyer as a person. However, there may also be situations in which the seller has little information about the object they are selling, possibly because of the object’s novelty or rarity or simply because they are uninformed. In such contexts, sellers may seek to better understand the plausible value of their object, possibly taking the buyer's critique as a source of information about the object's shortcomings and, as a result, revising their valuation downward.

To explore this possibility and more generally understand how and why critique rationales work or backfire, Study 4 manipulated market information (low versus high) as well as offer rationale (constraint versus critique). When sellers have reasonable information about the market value of their object, I expected to replicate my previous findings such that buyers that make constraint rationales would fare better than those that make critique rationales, both in terms of their instrumental outcomes as well as their relational outcomes. On the other hand, when sellers have little information about the market, I predicted that the gap between buyers’

critique and constraint rationales on instrumental and relational outcomes would close. Indeed, I thought this gap might even reverse, with critique yielding better outcomes than constraint when sellers were largely uninformed. Regardless of the differences *between* critique and constraint rationales, I expected that *within* critique rationales, I would find a significant effect of information such that buyers' critique rationales would fare substantially better when sellers were relatively uninformed versus informed.

Method

Participants and design. As with the previous studies, I conducted sample size analyses using G*Power and determined that I needed a sample of at least 240 for this study to attain adequate power ($1 - \beta > .80$). Two hundred and forty-five U.S. participants responded to an online survey for payment through Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform. Using the same attention and comprehension checks as in Studies 2 and 3, 38 participants were excluded from the analyses. This left 207 U.S. adults in the sample (112 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 36.57$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.14$). The experiment had a 2 (market information: low, high) X 2 (type of rationale: critique, constraint) between-participants design.

Materials and procedure. After reviewing informed consent materials, participants were asked to imagine that they were working for a full-service resort, heading an event team that helps clients arrange various meetings and events. The scenario described that the buyer, a potential client that was arranging a two-day offsite meeting for his organization, was looking for rooms that could accommodate his team's needs and asking the seller for a price quote. All participants were in the seller role and were randomly assigned to one of two scenarios with different descriptions of how much market information they had about the value of their service. In the high market information condition, participants read that they "have a pretty clear sense of

typical market prices” and that they “have gathered information about what current rates are, and have detailed information about the market.” In the low market information condition, participants read that they “don’t have much sense for typical market prices” and that they “have tried their best to gather information about what current rates would be, but have come up empty handed.” Across both conditions, participants were told that they made a first offer of \$8,000.

The buyer then told the seller that they would call back after discussing the offer with their colleagues. When the buyer called back, half of the participants received a constraint rationale from the buyer, which focused on the buyer’s financial restrictions (“...the company has had a tough fiscal year and has a very limited budget. The price you are asking is above the limit of what the company can afford for the offsite.”). The other half received a critique rationale from the buyer, which focused on the (lacking) quality of the seller’s resort (“From the pictures online, the rooms at the resort look small and somewhat cramped. The meeting room also appears pretty dated and has an odd layout that isn’t ideal for our event.”). The buyer then made a counteroffer of \$6,500 in both conditions.

In addition to the instrumental and relational measures from Studies 2 and 3, I asked participants to indicate how comfortable they felt about the price they were offering to the buyer, and how confident they were that their initial offer to the buyer was a reasonable offer, using seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*. I also included a question at the end of the survey as a manipulation check measure, asking participants how much information they had about the market when making their offer, using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *very little information* to 7 = *a lot of information*.

Results

To assess whether the market information manipulation had the intended effect, I compared participants' responses in the high and low market information conditions. As anticipated, participants in the high market information condition reported having significantly more information about the resorts market when making their offer ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.79$) than participants in the low market information condition ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 1.42$), $t(205) = 14.44$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.02$. Furthermore, participants with high market information felt more comfortable about the offer they made to the buyer ($M = 5.81$, $SD = 1.31$), and felt more confident that their offer was a reasonable one ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.25$) compared to those with low market information (price comfort: $M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.67$, $t(205) = 10.73$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.49$; offer confidence: $M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.65$, $t(205) = 7.05$, $p < .001$, $d = .98$).

Instrumental outcomes. Consistent with my expectations, in the high market information condition, a very similar pattern of results emerged for all three of the instrumental measures. Replicating my previous findings, a backlash to critique rationales emerged such that critique rationales, compared to constraint rationales, evoked less favorable (i.e., higher for buyers) assumptions of reservation prices, counteroffers, and anticipated settlement prices from sellers (Figure 2). In contrast, when sellers had relatively little information about the market, critique rationales were as effective as constraint rationales, with sellers showing no difference in their assumption of the buyer's reservation price, counteroffer amount, and anticipated settlement values in response to constraint and critique rationales (Figure 2). Critique rationales did not fare better than constraint rationales under the low information condition—but they did not fare significantly worse.

To further understand the effect that market information had on the efficacy of critique rationales, I contrasted seller responses to critique rationales in low versus high market

information conditions. As predicted, when buyers made critique rationales, sellers with low information made significantly more conciliatory counteroffers ($M = 7,147.12$, $SD = 321.98$) compared to those with high information on the market ($M = 7,348.04$, $SD = 350.99$), $t(101) = 3.03$, $p = .003$, $d = .60$. Sellers also anticipated lower settlement values (i.e., more favorable to buyer) when they had low information about the market ($M = 6,967.31$, $SD = 234.08$), compared to when they had high information about the market ($M = 7,122.55$, $SD = 280.06$), $t(101) = 3.06$, $p = .003$, $d = .60$. Assumptions of reservation prices did not show significant differences across market information conditions, though the pattern of means was in the expected direction with sellers in the low market information condition assuming lower reservation prices from their buyer counterparts ($M = 7,488.46$, $SD = 828.81$) than sellers in the high market information condition ($M = 7,700.00$, $SD = 793.47$), $t(101) = 1.32$, $p = .19$, $d = .26$. In short, as expected, critique offers fared better for buyers when sellers had limited information about the market.

On the other hand, sellers' responses to constraint rationales did not differ based on the amount of information they had about the market. I interpret the overall pattern of results as suggesting that sellers often take buyers' constraint rationales as diagnostic about the buyers, regardless of how much information the sellers have about the market, but that sellers are more likely to take buyers' critique rationales as informative about instrumental outcomes when they are relatively uninformed about the object under negotiation.

Mediation. I expected to replicate my mediation findings from Studies 2 and 3 in the high market information condition. More specifically, I predicted that sellers' assumptions about buyers' reservation prices would account for the effect that rationale type (dummy coding for constraint versus critique rationales) had on instrumental outcomes when sellers had high information on the value of their good. Indeed, a bootstrap analysis with 5,000 resamples (Hayes,

2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2004) revealed that the seller's assumption of buyer resistance price mediated the effect of the type of rationale on the seller's counteroffer (*indirect effect* = 105.00, *SE* = 38.32, 95% CI [35.98, 188.34]) and on the seller's anticipated settlement value (*indirect effect* = 107.64, *SE* = 52.90, 95% CI [4.81, 215.13]).

On the other hand, when sellers had little information about the value of their good, sellers' assumptions of buyers' reservation prices did not account for the effect of the type of rationale on the seller's counteroffer (*indirect effect* = 31.34, *SE* = 25.67, 95% CI [-7.41, 96.05]; confidence interval includes zero) or anticipated settlement value (*indirect effect* = 51.72, *SE* = 56.81, 95% CI [-53.10, 168.45]). This is not surprising as none of the instrumental variables were significantly related to the rationale variable.

I conducted further exploratory analyses to understand why the backlash to critique is mitigated when sellers have little information about the value of their good. I suspected that one potential explanation is the amount of confidence the seller has in their offer. When sellers have high information about the value of their good and, thus, have reasonable confidence in the price they are offering, critique rationales may be dismissed as having little to no persuasive or informational value. However, when sellers have relatively low information about their good and, thus, have little confidence in the value of their good, I expected sellers to become more open to taking critique rationales as informative about the good's worth. I conducted a bootstrap analysis with 5,000 resamples to test if sellers' confidence in their offer would account for the effect of market information (dummy coding for low versus high market information) on instrumental outcomes. As expected, sellers' confidence in their offers mediated the effect of market information on sellers' counteroffers (*indirect effect* = 96.62, *SE* = 38.21, 95% CI [34.37, 186.27]), and on their anticipated settlement values (*indirect effect* = 74.61, *SE* = 30.42, 95% CI

[25.11, 146.30]), in response to critique rationales. Sellers' confidence in their offer did not explain their estimation of buyers' reservation prices (*indirect effect* = 81.67, *SE* = 84.27, 95% CI [-57.94, 282.46]), which was not surprising given that I predicted market information to affect information related to the seller's object rather than the buyer's limits.

Relational outcomes. A similar pattern emerged for relational outcomes. I created a net evaluation measure ("net positive evaluation") that subtracted negative evaluations ("aggressive, competitive", "stubborn, demanding", "selfish, cold", "sneaky, devious"; $\alpha = .87$) from positive evaluations ("trustworthy, cooperative", "helpful, considerate"; $\alpha = .86$) to measure the overall valence of how sellers felt about their buyer counterparts. A higher number on this measure represents a more positive (and less negative) evaluation the seller made about the buyer.

Consistent with my expectations, when sellers had high information about the market, they felt more negatively towards buyers making critique rationales ($M = -.020$, $SD = 2.19$) compared to buyers making constraint rationales ($M = .83$, $SD = 2.19$), $t(105) = 1.99$, $p = .049$, $d = .39$. However, when sellers had relatively low information about the market, they did not show a difference in their impressions of buyers making constraint rationales ($M = .98$, $SD = 1.92$) and buyers making critique rationales ($M = .38$, $SD = 2.34$), $t(98) = 1.39$, $p = .17$, $d = .28$. No differences emerged when comparing perceived impressions from constraint and critique rationales across high and low market information conditions (both p 's > .37)

Discussion

Study 4 manipulated rationales and market information, seeking evidence for a predicted boundary to the divergence across rationales: The gap between constraint and critique rationales on negotiation outcomes would close, or even reverse, when sellers have low market information about the value of their object. My expectations were partly confirmed with the previously

examined differences in assumed counterpart reservation prices, counteroffers, anticipated settlement values, and impressions falling to non-significant levels when sellers had low information about the market. Specifically, as in my earlier studies, critique (versus constraint) rationales led to worse instrumental and relational outcomes when sellers had some degree of information about the market—but not when they had very little information. In other words, the gap between the rationales closed under low information, but I found no evidence that it reversed, with critique rationales yielding better outcomes for buyers.

Setting aside the gaps between rationales, I observed that, for critique rationales, buyers fared significantly better when sellers had less (versus more) information about the market. Further exploratory mediation analyses revealed that sellers' confidence in their offer accounted for the effect of market information on instrumental outcomes. These results suggest that sellers at least partly take critique rationales as a source of information and persuasive appeal when they lack other sources to reference and, thus, lack confidence about the value of their object.

General Discussion

I have argued that the impact and mechanisms of rationales will best come into focus when scholars can distinguish between different and meaningful kinds of rationales that negotiators use. The present work did not attempt to account for the full universe of rationales, but rather focused on two particular rationales often employed by buyers during bargaining: critique rationales, which focus on the quality and shortcomings of what the seller is offering, and constraint rationales, which focus on limitations in a buyer's own situation. I suggested that buyers' critique rationales may often provoke reactance from sellers, especially when they have reasonable confidence in the value of the negotiated object, who may see such criticism as a groundless attack, discounting its information value and taking a dim view of the buyer.

Constraint rationales, in contrast, may often succeed by functioning as excuses, shifting the focus away from the buyer to their external circumstances and being taken as diagnostic signals of the buyer's limits.

My central prediction revolved around this novel distinction: Critique rationales would lead to worse instrumental and relational outcomes than constraint rationales. I tested this idea across a series of studies, finding considerable support for it. In Study 1, I analyzed recordings of dyadic negotiation roleplays, coding spontaneous use of constraint and critique rationales. Buyers who emphasized constraint rationales and used them more frequently reached significantly better outcomes and were judged by their counterparts to have lower reservation prices. In contrast, the emphasis on, and frequency of, critique rationales was not related to final outcomes or sellers' estimate of buyers' resistance points.

Study 2 provided evidence of causality by experimentally manipulating rationales. Sellers receiving constraint (versus critique) rationales made more generous counteroffers and ascribed lower reservation prices to buyers. Furthermore, recipients of constraint (versus critique) rationales had more positive impressions of buyers. In Study 3, I expanded my approach to include rationales crafted by one wave of participants (in the role of buyers) and provided to a second, yoked wave of participants (in the role of sellers). I counseled some buyers to offer constraint rationales and others to offer critique rationales. A third (control) buyer condition gave no particular directions about rationales. Again, I found that critique rationales fared worse for buyers than constraint ones in terms of instrumental outcomes. In addition, relationship effects were substantial: Critique rationales led to impressions that were significantly more negative than the control condition whereas constraint rationales led to impressions that were significantly more positive than the control condition.

Across these studies, I also explored a potential information value mechanism, testing whether sellers' assumptions about buyers' reservation prices partly or wholly mediated the link between rationales and outcomes. I found support for this idea across the studies, suggesting that one path by which constraint rationales have more benefits than critique ones is because they are taken as valid signals of a buyer's limits.

I also expected that one context in which critique rationales are not disadvantageous is when the seller is relatively uninformed about the value of the object under negotiation. Study 4 sought to test this idea by manipulating the amount of market information sellers had. As expected, I replicated the gap between critique and constraint rationale outcomes when sellers had reasonable market information, but this gap closed (i.e., was not statistically significant) when they had little information.

In sum, constraint rationales may often yield benefits for buyers, in part because they are taken as signaling a buyer's limits while at the same time cultivating a positive image of the buyer – quite likely by shifting causal attributions to external sources. Critique rationales, on the other hand, may often be damaging for buyers. Instead of appearing to signal a buyer's limit, they may be taken as an uninformative attack that in turn provokes a seller's reactance, especially when the seller has reasonable information on the value of the object under negotiation.

Chapter 3: *Why Buyers Employ Backfiring (Critique) Rationales*

When negotiating a potential purchase—from yard-sale furniture to a used car to a house—many buyers find it hard to resist offering some critique, ranging from sly to savage. “That bookshelf has a water stain,” they might say, or “Your fender is dented,” or “This roof is a total disaster.” My findings from Chapter 2 suggests that, a great share of the time, such critiques *backfire*. Across a range of studies in Chapter 2, I found no evidence that critique (compared to alternative rationales, or no rationale) generally helped buyers. Rather, I found widespread evidence that critique frequently led sellers to push back in their bargaining terms and to see the buyers making such overtures more negatively. But if critique is often ineffective, or even regularly counterproductive, why do buyers do it so frequently? And is there any way for buyers to reduce the odds of a critique backfiring?

This chapter addresses these two previously-unanswered questions. In brief, I believe that part of the answer to the first question (i.e., why buyers frequently employ critique) lies in a sizeable gap between how buyers offering critiques, compared to the sellers receiving them, perceive these messages. Buyers tend to see critiquing rationales as fair and legitimate points—and they expect their counterparts will see them similarly. In contrast, sellers receiving these critiques view them overwhelmingly as unwarranted and unfair “cheap shots⁴.” Regarding the second question (i.e., how backlash might be curbed), I find that when buyers actively engage in perspective-taking before crafting a critique rationale, sellers appear to respond more positively

⁴ Throughout this research, I use the colloquial term “cheap shot” to reflect the perception by a seller that a buyer’s critique is unfair and unwarranted. My prior experience in research and teaching leads me to believe this captures a meaningful reaction sellers may have to critique from buyers, essentially reflecting the extent to which a critiquing rationale is seen as (un)fair and (in)appropriate. I believe this subjective, qualitative judgment can operate as a dichotomy as well as a spectrum; I measure perceptions both ways in this research. Most of the analyses I pursue treat this judgment as a dependent variable. In Study 7, I present analyses that explore the potential impact and meaning of this judgment.

(e.g., view the critiques as more fair and reasonable). Exploratory analyses give some clues about message features that might underlie this effect.

My results offer some potential explanations for why a common negotiation tactic may often backfire and also why so many negotiators may nonetheless continue to employ it. My conclusions hold practical implications for how bargainers might proceed more effectively. More broadly, my account and evidence shed new light on the role of egocentric perceptions in negotiation and conflict. A good deal of past work shows that parties are often self-absorbed in the terms they offer (e.g., Babcock & Loewenstein, 1997) and the deal dimensions they consider (e.g., Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008). The present research shows that egocentric perceptions apply not only to the deal terms negotiators propose but also to the rationales and stories they offer to accompany them.

I Say Fair Point, You Say Cheap Shot

In most bargaining situations, buyers are eager to pay the lowest price possible (cf Raiffa, 1982). This motivation likely channels some of their attention to the shortcomings and flaws of an object under negotiation as they evaluate how much to pay or what to offer for it. Buyers may also feel that overtly highlighting shortcomings and flaws in communication with sellers could lead these counterparts to reduce their evaluation of, or demands for, whatever they are offering. Thus, a self-serving value-conserving motivation may lead buyers to attend to, as well as talk about, the negative qualities of an object under negotiation. Indeed, one study of real-world negotiations found that around 60 percent of those who self-identified as buyers indicated that they had used critique in a recent bargaining episode in pursuit of a better deal (Ames & Wazlawek, 2014; Study 2).

Aside from material outcomes, buyers tend to share the basic human desire to see oneself positively, including being fair and reasonable (e.g., Batson, Thompson, Seufferling, Whitney, & Strongman, 1999; Kramer, Newton, & Pommerenke, 1993). This motivation may often lead to the perception that one's thinking and actions are fair—and even free from the biases that might beset other people (e.g., Messick, Bloom Bolidzar, & Samuelson, 1985; Pronin, 2007). As such, buyers may be inclined to see any critique rationales they offer in the course of negotiating as fair and reasonable.

Sellers on the receiving end of buyers' critiques may often have a markedly different point of view. Their motivation to command a high price or great value may draw them to attend to an object's positive qualities and to de-emphasize any shortcomings. Sellers who own the object under negotiation are also likely to experience perceptions associated with the endowment effect, with people finding goods they own to be especially appealing (e.g., Gawronski, Bodenhausen, & Becker, 2007; Morewedge, Shu, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2009). Thus, sellers are likely to be positively disposed to an object they offer in a negotiation—and a buyer's qualitative critique of that object, regardless of the price they propose, may often represent a stark contrast with the seller's perceptions. Knowing that a buyer may be eager to lower the price they pay, sellers may see them as biased (e.g., Pronin, 2007) or as attempting a persuasive gambit (Friedstad & Wright, 1994). Whether they admit it or not, sellers receiving critiques may even feel personally offended, seeing their object as an extension of themselves (e.g., Gawronski et al., 2007; Lee & Ames, 2018) and reacting to criticism of it as if it were a personal attack (e.g., Simons & Peterson, 2000).

The result of all of the dynamics noted above is that sellers may be predisposed to see buyer critiques as unfair and unwarranted cheap shots even though buyers will often fail to

appreciate this. I believe this gap in perceptions of rationales has never before been empirically demonstrated, though it fits with prior work on limited self-awareness in conflict (e.g., Ames & Wazlawek, 2014) and also resonates with scholarship on empathy gaps and egocentric perceptions in negotiations (e.g., Van Boven, Dunning, & Loewenstein, 2000). Much of this past work on negotiations has focused on perceptions of and behaviors surrounding deal-terms and prices whereas the present work appears to be the first to examine offer-maker and offer-recipient perceptions of different rationales, holding offer terms themselves constant.

Can Perspective-Taking Mitigate Backlash?

Past work suggests that empathy gaps can emerge in part because individuals do not spontaneously or effectively take others' perspectives into account. People may often anchor on their own experience or perceptions, assuming that others share them (e.g., Van Boven, Loewenstein, Dunning, & Nordgren, 2013). Accordingly, a good deal of work shows that explicitly directing a person to actively take someone else's perspective—to step into that person's shoes and see a situation from their point of view—changes the perspective-taker's perceptions, allowing them to set aside or de-anchor from their own viewpoint. In a conflict or negotiation context, perspective-taking can lead to different proposals or even a reframing of the situation and expansion of the dimensions under consideration, increasing the odds of mutual agreement and collective value (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008).

I suspect these dynamics would apply to buyers offering critique rationales in negotiations. I predict that actively considering a seller's point of view in the course of crafting a critique would lead buyers to adjust their messages in ways that would reduce the likelihood of seller counterparts seeing that rationale as a cheap shot. My experimental work pursues this

approach. I also conduct exploratory analyses to discover what message features might be implicated in such an effect.

Predictions and Plan of Study

The present work revolves around two central predictions. First, I predict a previously-undocumented empathy gap: When buyers use critique rationales in the course of bargaining, they will be far less likely than their seller counterparts to see those messages as cheap shots (versus fair and reasonable critiques)—and they will underestimate the likelihood of sellers seeing those messages as cheap shots. Second, I predict an impact of perspective-taking: When buyers engage in perspective-taking in advance of offering critique rationales, their seller counterparts will be less likely to see those rationales as cheap shots. I conducted exploratory analyses to see if I could identify features of buyers' messages that might be affected by perspective-taking and that might in turn lead sellers to see them as more reasonable and fair.

In additional analyses, I examined whether sellers' perceptions of buyer rationales as cheap shots are associated with other reactions, including sellers' counteroffers and impressions. A lack of such links would suggest that "cheap shot" perceptions are incidental or potentially irrelevant to negotiation and conflict dynamics. In contrast, I anticipated that robust links would emerge, expecting that sellers viewing a buyer's message as a cheap shot (versus a fair point) would be considerably less generous in negotiation terms (e.g., make a more aggressive counteroffer) and would see the buyer more negatively.

I examined these predictions in three studies. In Study 5, I asked participants to provide judgments of buyers' messages captured in Chapter 2 that showed seller backlash to buyers' critique rationales. I assigned some participants to read the messages from a seller perspective and others from a buyer perspective, analyzing whether this perspective manipulation affected

judgments of the messages as cheap shots. In Study 6, a sample of participants assumed the role of a buyer in a hypothetical negotiation, generating and judging their own critique messages. A separate, yoked sample assumed the role of a seller, judging their yoked buyer counterpart's message. Again, I analyzed whether role affected judgments of the messages as cheap shots. Study 7 also used a yoked design, though it changed buyer judgments from perceptions (what they thought of their own message) to meta-perceptions (what they thought their seller counterparts would think of their message) and also counseled some buyers to engage in perspective-taking before generating their messages. I analyzed the gap between buyers' meta-perceptions and sellers' actual perceptions as well as whether perspective-taking affected seller reactions.

While prior work on egocentric perceptions and perspective-taking is consistent with my predictions, I believe no other research has examined how these dynamics apply to rationales employed in bargaining. It is possible, of course, that no such prior work exists because my account is wrong. It could be that buyers recognize that their overtures are often seen as cheap shots, but they embrace them nonetheless as part of the tussle of bargaining. It could also be that the expected empathy gap emerges, but perspective-taking does not meaningfully close it, perhaps because buyers gain little by simply thinking about a seller's point of view. And it might also be that cheap shot perceptions are not significantly associated with judgments of counterparts or counteroffers, perhaps because these perceptions are not a natural or meaningful part of negotiator thinking. I take the opposite position on each of these matters and believe it is worth gathering evidence that I hope can help bargainers find more effective approaches and spur scholars to continue to explore the psychology of rationales in conflict and negotiation.

Study 5

I began by gauging perceptions of negotiator rationales captured in Study 3 of Chapter 2. In this work, one set of participants assumed the role of a buyer in a hypothetical negotiation, acting as a café owner negotiating with a contractor for an interior design and renovation project. The background information for this role indicated that the owner had gathered information that raised questions about the novelty and trendiness of the contractor's work. The owner's role information also signaled serious budget constraints for the café. While all participants in the owner (buyer) condition read these same basic details, they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions related to the kinds of rationales they were guided to use in their response to the contractor's (seller's) initial offer. Of primary interest here are the buyer participants instructed to offer "critique" rationales, who were told, in their response to the contractor, to "focus on how the quality of the (contracting) company's designs is affecting your counteroffer amount . . . by elaborating on why you don't think the designs are worth as much as the designer (contractor) claims." Compared to participants in a control condition who received no special guidance about rationales, those in the critique condition elicited more negative negotiation outcomes (e.g., their seller counterparts made more assertive counteroffers, expressed a greater likelihood of impasse, and saw the buyers more negatively), even though offer amounts were held constant.

Although this prior study captured various negotiation-related outcomes, it did not capture or compare the buyer's and seller's *perceptions* of the offer as being a cheap shot or fair point. My central question in the present study is: Would perceivers asked to judge critiquing offers from the seller's (i.e., offer-recipient's) point of view be more likely to see those offers as cheap shots (i.e., unfair, unwarranted criticism) than those judging the offers from the buyer's point of view? I believe such a gap will emerge, which might help explain both the readiness of buyers to use such approaches (i.e., buyers think these rationales are reasonable) and the

tendency of sellers to display backlash in the wake of such approaches (i.e., sellers think these rationales are inappropriate).

In sum, Study 5 randomly assigned participants (who were not part of the studies in Chapter 2) to either a buyer or seller role and had them report on their perceptions of critiquing rationales offered by buyers in Chapter 2. I compared perceptions of whether these rationales were cheap shots or fair points across these two role conditions, expecting to find that sellers (i.e., offer recipients) would be considerably more likely to see the critiquing rationales as cheap shots.

Method

Participants and design. One hundred and nineteen U.S. participants responded to an online survey for payment through Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform (a target sample size of 120 was determined in advance based on expectations of likely effect sizes and the expected share of cases passing attention checks; data collection was halted at the pre-determined target). Fourteen participants provided incomplete responses or failed at least one of two attention check questions (e.g., "In the previous scenario, what role were you in?"). This left 105 U.S. adults in the final sample (52 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 36.54$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.56$). The experiment had a single between-participants factor (role perspective: seller (offer recipient), buyer (offer maker)). Based on my final sample, I used the software program G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) to conduct a sensitivity power analysis for the central test of my hypothesis (an independent sample *t*-test, comparing cheap shot ratings between those in the buyer (48) and seller (57) perspective conditions). With an alpha significance criterion of .05 (two-tailed), and minimum power of .80 (Cohen, 1988), there is an 80% chance of detecting an effect size of $d = 0.55$.

Materials and procedure. After reviewing informed consent materials, participants were randomly assigned to the role of buyer or seller and given the relevant role information provided to participants in Study 3 of Chapter 2. Participants were then presented with a randomly-chosen message from the pool of messages offered by buyers in the critique condition in Study 3⁵. I took all 40 messages from the prior study and presented these randomly to buyer and seller participants in the present study (i.e., buyers and sellers in the present study were judging the same set of rationales).

Sellers in the present study were told to imagine that, as a seller, “you receive the following message from the buyer” (after which the rationale was presented). They then read that “Sometimes, buyers say something about an object under negotiation that seems like a ‘cheap shot,’ like an unfair or unwarranted criticism of the thing being offered. Other times, buyers say something about an object under negotiation that seems like a ‘reasonable critique,’ like a fair or appropriate criticism of the thing being offered.” They were then given a dichotomous choice about the message they had reviewed, judging it as “more like a ‘cheap shot’ than a ‘reasonable critique’” or the reverse. After this binary judgment, participants rated the message on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (“This is much more like a ‘reasonable critique’”) to 7 (“This is much more like a ‘cheap shot’”).

Buyers in the present study were told to imagine that, as a buyer, “you send the following message to the seller” (after which the rationale was presented). They then completed measures parallel to those noted above, including a binary and seven-point rating of the message.

⁵ In Study 3, a research assistant blind to the hypothesis and I read through the original 164 responses and selected 40 responses per condition (120 responses total for all three conditions) that implemented the specific rationales as instructed (e.g., setting aside cases where a critique rationale was made when the buyer participant was asked to make a constraint rationale).

Participants subsequently completed attention checks, including indicating which role they were in (café owner or founder of design company) and whose message they were evaluating (café owner or founder of design company). The survey concluded by asking demographic questions, including age, gender, ethnicity, and education.

Results

Of the 119 participants, 14 were excluded for failing at least one of the attention check questions. (Note: I report all measures, manipulations, and exclusions in this and my other studies) My results focus on responses from the remaining participants (48 buyers and 57 sellers).

As expected, a clear majority of sellers (68.4%, 39 of 57) judged the messages from buyers as being a cheap shot rather than a reasonable critique. A smaller share of buyers (45.8%, 22 of 48) saw the same messages, which they were asked to imagine giving, as cheap shots (a significantly lower proportion, $\text{Chi-sq} = 5.46, p = .019, w$ (Cramer's phi) = 0.228). Similarly, ratings on the seven-point scale showed that sellers were more inclined to see the message as a cheap shot (versus reasonable critique) than buyers, $M = 4.91$ ($SD = 1.63$) versus $M = 3.94$ ($SD = 1.82$), $t(103) = 2.90, p = .005, d = 0.571$.

Discussion

Study 3 revealed that buyers guided to give critiquing rationales for their offers, compared with those in a control condition, were met with less accommodating and less positive responses from their counterparts (including more assertive counteroffers and more negative impressions). However, that research did not capture how the offer recipients (i.e., the sellers) judged the message itself (e.g., as an unfair or warranted cheap shot or a fair and appropriate criticism) nor did it compare such judgments between buyers and sellers. Study 5's participants

considered the critique rationales crafted by buyers in this prior work, viewing them from either a buyer perspective (imagining that they had made the offer) or a seller perspective (imagining that they had received the offer). This perspective manipulation confirmed my suspicion that buyers would be vastly less likely than sellers to see the offers as cheap shots.

Study 6

Study 5 presented something of a conservative test of my account: participants, randomly assigned to a buyer or seller perspective, read messages featuring critique rationales generated by another sample of buyers. As expected, those in the seller perspective—on the receiving end of the critique—were far more likely than those in the buyer perspective to see the message they viewed as an unwarranted cheap shot. This study revealed my predicted gap without any “authorship” effect (i.e., buyers were judging messages they themselves did not generate). I suspected that this gap would widen even further with a group of buyers generating their own critique rationales. These buyers, I hypothesized, would be even more likely to see their own criticisms as reasonable and appropriate, while the sellers receiving these messages would continue to react negatively. Study 6 pursued this idea, using the same scenario and measures as Study 5, but having buyers generate their own offers with critique rationales.

Method

Participants and design. The design involved two phases and two samples of participants, both recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk platform. In the first phase, a sample of 62 participants adopted a buyer perspective in the negotiation, counseled to give a critique rationale for their offer. A target sample size of 60 was determined in advance based on expectations of likely effect sizes and the expected share of cases passing attention checks; data collection was halted at the pre-determined target. The goal with this phase was to generate offer

messages that would be randomly presented to a separate yoked sample of seller participants in the second phase. For the first (buyer) phase sample, I excluded seven participants for failing to correctly answer one or more of three attention/comprehension check questions (e.g., identifying the amount in the original proposal for the design) and four participants for failing to follow instructions to include critique (e.g., pointing out design flaws) in their messages.

In the second phase, a sample of 62 participants adopted a seller perspective and were randomly assigned to view one of the buyer messages from the first phase. A target sample size of 60 was determined in advance based on expectations of likely effect sizes and the expected share of cases passing attention checks; data collection was halted at the pre-determined target.

For the second (seller) phase sample, I excluded seven participants for failing to pass attention or comprehension checks. This left 55 seller participants included in my analyses (25 identified themselves as women, with a mean age of 38.58, $SD = 15.21$). Because buyer messages were randomly assigned and some sellers were excluded (e.g., for failing attention checks), some buyer messages (10) were seen more than once and a handful (6) were not seen at all, leaving 45 buyer participants whose messages were included in my analyses (31 identified themselves as women, with a mean age of 37.80, $SD = 13.05$).

Based on my final sample, I used the software program G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to conduct a sensitivity power analysis for the central test of my hypothesis (an independent sample t -test, comparing cheap shot ratings between those in the buyer (45) and seller (55) role conditions). With an alpha significance criterion of .05 (two-tailed), and minimum power of 0.80 (Cohen, 1988), there is an 80% chance of detecting an effect size of $d = 0.57$.

Materials and procedure. The first phase of Study 6 placed a sample of participants in the buyer role in a hypothetical negotiation, the same scenario employed in Study 5. Participants,

acting as a café owner negotiating with a designer over a renovation project, were told they had gotten a proposal from the designer for \$20,000. They were instructed to make a counterproposal of \$16,000 and were encouraged to write a message that was critical of the quality of the proposed design work, including “pointing out their design’s flaws.”

After writing their message, buyers were asked to judge whether their message was more like a cheap shot or a reasonable critique, using the same dichotomous and seven-point items employed in Study 5. Participants also answered a number of attention check items, including identifying (from five options with one correct answer) the amount in the original proposal for the design and the amount in their own counterproposal. Participants concluded by responding to demographic questions.

Sixty-two participants generated rationales in the buyer role. Seven of those were excluded for failing to pass at least one attention check and four for not following instructions to critique the quality of the seller’s design work. This left 51 participants in the final buyer sample whose offers were randomly assigned to yoked sellers.

The second phase of Study 6 featured a sample of yoked participants in the seller role in the negotiation. I took all 51 buyer rationales from the first wave and presented them randomly to seller participants in the second wave. Participants, acting as the founder of an interior design firm, were told they had made a proposal to a café owner and were now reviewing the café owner’s counterproposal. Participants were randomly matched with a buyer from the first wave of Study 6, reading that participant’s message.

After reading the message, sellers were asked to judge whether it was more like a cheap shot or reasonable critique, using the same dichotomous and seven-point items employed in Study 5. Participants also answered a number of attention check items, including identifying

(from five options with one correct answer) the amount in their original proposal for the design and the amount in the buyer's counterproposal. Participants concluded by responding to demographic questions.

Results

As noted earlier, my analyses feature 55 seller participants (25 identified themselves as women, with a mean age of 38.58, $SD = 15.21$) who viewed messages from one of 45 buyers (31 identified themselves as women, with a mean age of 37.80, $SD = 13.05$).

As expected, a clear majority of sellers (74.5%, 41 of 55) saw the messages they received from buyers as being a cheap shot rather than a reasonable critique. A far smaller share of buyers (31.1%, 14 of 45) saw these messages, which they had created, as cheap shots (a significantly lower proportion, $\text{Chi-sq} = 18.87, p < .001, w = 0.434$). Similarly, ratings on the seven-point scale showed that sellers were more inclined to see the message as a cheap shot (versus a reasonable critique) than buyers, $M = 5.04 (SD = 1.60)$ versus $M = 3.38 (SD = 1.77)$, $t(98) = 4.91, p < .01, d = 0.992$).

Discussion

In Study 6, I asked participants in a buyer role in a hypothetical negotiation to make counterproposals featuring critiques of the seller's offering (in this case, plans for an interior design project). I passed these messages along to a second, yoked set of participants in a seller role, holding numerical values of the offer constant. As I expected, sellers receiving these messages were vastly more likely than the buyers offering these messages to see them as cheap shots rather than as fair or reasonable critiques.

It is worth noting that the share of sellers who saw the offers as cheap shots was quite consistent between Study 6 and Study 5 (74.5% and 68.4%, respectively) whereas the share of

buyers in Study 6 who saw the offers as cheap shots was noticeably lower than those in Study 5 (31.1% and 45.8%, respectively). Recall that in Study 5, participants in the buyer condition were reviewing a rationale generated by someone else, in contrast to Study 6, where participants in the buyer condition authored the offers themselves. I interpret this as suggesting that people view offers they themselves have crafted as being especially likely to be fair and appropriate, providing further evidence of egocentric perception.

Study 7

Studies 5 and 6 bear on the first question I noted in the introduction: If critique rationales are so frequently ineffective, why do buyers use them so often? My results thus far suggest that buyers may not realize that sellers are judging these messages as unwarranted and inappropriate, often failing to anticipate how negatively sellers will react. Study 7 takes two noteworthy additional steps beyond my findings so far. First, it employs a measure of meta-perception, asking buyers (who are offering critiques) not what they themselves think of their own offers but what they think their seller counterparts (those receiving the offer) will think. It could be that, in Studies 1 and 2, buyers thought their offers were reasonable but correctly anticipated that their counterparts would see them as unfair (e.g., “I think my critique is reasonable but I realize they might think it’s extreme”). If so, their meta-perceptions might generally be accurate, suggesting another explanation would be needed for why buyers so frequently rely on critique. In contrast, I follow a long tradition of work (e.g., Carlson, Vazire, & Furr, 2011; Kenny & DePaulo, 1993) in expecting that meta-perceptions are often heavily anchored on one’s own perceptions. Accordingly, I predicted that buyers would vastly underestimate the share of sellers who would see their offers as cheap shots.

A second noteworthy feature of Study 7 was an attempt to mitigate the backlash to critiques. As in Study 6, I counseled one group of buyers to provide a critique rationale for their offer, expecting to replicate my prior results. I counseled a second group of buyers to provide a critique rationale, but before writing their message, I instructed them to actively take the perspective of the seller. I expected that the addition of this perspective-taking effort would lead buyers to anticipate potential seller backlash and to craft messages that might mitigate this. This would reduce the likelihood of a seller seeing the buyer's message as a cheap shot.

To better understand the impact of these manipulations, I included a control condition in which I did not counsel buyers about offering any type of rationale. I did not have a strong *a priori* prediction about whether perspective-taking would bring cheap shot perceptions for critique rationales in line with this control condition, though my design allowed me to test this.

I also measured other negotiation outcomes, including asking sellers to report on their counteroffers, their assumption of the buyer's reservation price, their readiness to walk away, and their impressions of the buyer. This allowed me to test a basic question: Were cheap shot judgments meaningfully associated with these other reactions? A lack of clear links would raise questions about how meaningful cheap shot judgments are—and whether they are worth studying and explaining. In contrast, I expected to find robust relationships, suggesting that judgments about rationales are intertwined with judgments of counterparts and with negotiation behaviors, and thus worth examination.

Method

Participants and design. As in Study 6, the design involved two phases and two samples of participants, both recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform. In the first phase, a

sample of 231 participants adopted a buyer perspective in the negotiation, being randomly assigned to one of three between-participant conditions about what kind of offer to give: a) critique, b) critique + perspective taking, or c) control. A target sample size of 225 was determined in advance based on expectations of likely effect sizes and the expected share of cases passing attention checks; data collection was halted at the pre-determined target. The goal with this phase was to generate offer messages that would be randomly presented to a separate yoked sample of seller participants in the second phase. For the first (buyer) phase sample, I excluded 32 participants for failing to correctly answer one or more of two attention/comprehension check (e.g., identifying the amount in the original proposal for the design).

I then randomly sampled (using a random number generator) 50 buyer messages within each of the three conditions to create a pool of messages employed as stimuli for the study's second phase. In this second phase, a sample of 196 participants adopted a seller perspective and were randomly assigned to view a buyer message from one of the three pools. A target sample size of 200 was determined in advance based on expectations of likely effect sizes and the expected share of cases passing attention checks; data collection was halted at the pre-determined target.

For the second (seller) phase sample, I excluded 42 participants for failing to pass one or more of two attention or comprehension checks. This left 154 seller participants included in my sample (49 of whom read a message from a buyer in the critique condition, 51 from a buyer in the critique + perspective-taking condition, and 54 from a buyer in the control condition). Among these 154 seller participants featured in my analyses, 79 identified themselves as women, with a mean age of 37.99 ($SD = 12.83$).

Buyer messages were randomly assigned to sellers from each pool of 50 messages. Some were seen by multiple sellers in my final seller sample and others were not seen by any seller in my final seller sample. In the end, my final sample of 154 seller participants had seen messages from 119 unique buyers (38 of whom were in the critique condition, 39 in the critique + perspective-taking condition, and 42 in the control condition). Among these 119 buyer participants whose messages were featured in my analyses, 67 identified themselves as women, with a mean age of 37.67 ($SD = 11.63$).

Based on my final sample, I used the software program G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to conduct a sensitivity power analysis for the central test of my hypothesis (an independent sample t -test, comparing cheap shot ratings between sellers receiving offers from buyers in the critique condition (49) and sellers receiving offers from buyers in the critique + perspective-taking condition (51)). With an alpha significance criterion of .05 (two-tailed), and minimum power of 0.80 (Cohen, 1988), there is an 80% chance of detecting an effect size of $d = 0.57$.

Materials and procedure. The first phase of Study 7 placed a sample of participants in the buyer role in a hypothetical negotiation, the same scenario employed in Studies 5 and 6. Participants, acting as a café owner negotiating with a designer over a renovation project, were told they had gotten a proposal from the designer for \$20,000. Within the buyer role, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Those in the control condition were instructed to make a counterproposal of \$16,000 and were welcomed to craft any message they wished without any particular guidance. Those in the critique condition (analogous to the buyer condition in Study 6) were instructed to make a counterproposal of \$16,000 and were encouraged to write a message that was critical of the quality of the proposed design work, including “pointing out their design’s flaws.” Those in the critique + perspective-taking

condition were given the same instructions as the critique condition with an additional note that encouraged them to take the perspective of the seller: “Try to understand how [the seller] would react when reading your message, including both what you say and how you are saying it. Think about your message as if you were them.”

After writing their message, buyers were asked to predict their seller counterpart’s judgment of the message (i.e., their meta-perception): “We want to know what you think your counterpart ... will think of your message ...” Participants indicated their meta-perception first on a dichotomous item and then on a seven-point scale adapted from those used in Studies 5 and 6. Participants also answered a number of attention check items, including identifying (from five options with one correct answer) the amount in the original proposal for the design and the amount in their own counterproposal. Participants concluded by responding to demographic questions.

The second phase of Study 7 featured a sample of yoked participants in the seller role in the negotiation. Participants, acting as the founder of an interior design firm, were told they had made a proposal to a café owner and were now reviewing the café owner’s counterproposal. Participants were randomly matched with a buyer message from the first phase of Study 7. After reading the message, these seller participants were asked to judge whether it was more like a cheap shot or reasonable critique, using the same dichotomous and seven-point items employed in Studies 5 and 6. In addition, I included measures used in Chapter 2 to gauge negotiation outcomes, asking sellers to indicate what dollar-value counter-proposal they would make in the wake of the buyer’s proposal, their expectation of the buyer’s reservation price (i.e., the most the buyer would pay), and their prediction of the settlement price if a deal was reached. Sellers also indicated their likelihood of turning down the offer and walking away, their likelihood of

recommending the buyer to a friend, and their impressions of buyers, rating them on six pairs of adjectives (“stubborn, demanding,” “aggressive, competitive,” “helpful, considerate,” “sneaky, devious,” “trustworthy, cooperative,” and “selfish, cold”). These items were rated on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (“Not at all”) to 7 (“Very much”). Sellers answered a number of attention check items, including identifying (from five options with one correct answer) the amount in their original proposal for the design and the amount in the buyer’s counterproposal. Participants concluded by responding to demographic questions.

Results

As noted earlier, my analyses featured a final sample of 154 seller participants who had seen messages from 119 unique buyers (38 of whom were in the critique condition, 39 in the critique + perspective-taking condition, and 42 in the control condition). Among the seller participants, 79 identified themselves as women, with a mean age of 37.99 ($SD = 12.83$). Among these buyer participants, 67 identified themselves as women, with a mean age of 37.67 ($SD = 11.63$).

Replicating the buyer-seller gap with meta-perceptions. I first focused on the critique condition, examining whether this replicated what I found in Studies 5 and 6. As expected, a clear majority of sellers (75.5%, 37 of 49) saw the messages they received from buyers as being a cheap shot rather than a reasonable critique. In Study 7, buyers reported their meta-perceptions (what they thought sellers would think of their messages) rather than their own perceptions (as in Studies 5 and 6). I expected these meta-perceptions would show a pattern similar to what I had found previously, with buyers vastly underestimating the share of sellers seeing their rationales as cheap shots. As predicted (see Table 3), a far smaller share of buyers (46.9%, 23 of 49) expected that these messages would be seen by sellers as cheap shots (a significantly lower

proportion, $\text{Chi-sq} = 8.43, p = .004, w = 0.293$). Similarly, ratings on the seven-point scale showed that sellers were more inclined to see the message as a cheap shot (versus reasonable critique) than buyers expected, $M = 5.02 (SD = 1.57)$ versus $M = 4.37 (SD = 1.27), t(48) = 2.28, p = .03, d = 0.658$).

The impact of perspective-taking. Having replicated my prior results using the meta-perception measure, I turned my attention to comparing the experimental conditions. I expected that buyers in the critique + perspective-taking condition would evoke a lower likelihood of cheap shot judgments from their seller counterparts than buyers in the critique condition. Indeed, a smaller share of sellers judged messages from buyers in the critique + perspective-taking condition to be cheap shots (54.9%, 28 of 51) than sellers receiving messages from buyers in the critique condition (75.5%, 37 of 49; see Table 3). Similarly, ratings on the seven-point scale showed that sellers receiving offers from buyers in the critique + perspective-taking condition were less inclined to see the message as a cheap shot than those receiving offers from buyers in the critique condition, $M = 4.12 (SD = 1.87)$ versus $M = 5.02 (SD = 1.57), t(98) = 2.60, p = .01, d = 0.525$).

These results suggest that perspective-taking at least partly mitigated the impact of critique. However, as shown in Table 3, it appears that messages from critique + perspective-taking buyers were judged more negatively by sellers than messages from buyers in the control condition. In other words, even with perspective-taking, critique led to more cheap shot perceptions than the control condition.

I also examined buyers' meta-perceptions across conditions. As with seller reactions, these became more positive with the addition of perspective-taking over critique alone (see Table 3). In other words, perspective-taking buyers not only evoked less negative reactions, they

perceived that they had evoked less negative reactions. However, a substantial buyer-seller gap nonetheless emerged in both the critique and critique + perspective-taking conditions, with buyers significantly under-estimating cheap shot perceptions in both conditions. In sum, perspective-taking appeared to mitigate both actual and anticipated backlash to critique rationales, but a substantial egocentric perception gap remained (and was present even in the control condition).

Exploratory analyses: Perspective-taking and message features. My results suggest that perspective-taking reduced backlash to critique. I pursued exploratory analyses on the messages from the critique and critique + perspective taking conditions in an attempt to understand what features might have played a role. I began by independently reviewing all buyer messages (looking for content features that were present in some but not all messages) and then reviewed messages grouped according to whether or not they were judged as cheap shots (looking for differential prevalence of features). Five features from this exploratory inductive review seemed to warrant further examination: gratitude (explicitly thanking the seller for their response, proposal, information, etc.), praise (complimenting, affirming, or praising the seller and/or their work in some way), fairness (explicitly referring to fairness or reasonableness), constraints (referring to some limit or constraint in their own resources), and eagerness (explicitly indicating a desire to work together and/or hope that a deal could be reached).

I coded these features (categorizing them as 0 = “not present” and 1 = “present,” based on consensus between the authors) and then conducted analyses to clarify whether these features were more or less prevalent in the critique versus critique + perspective-taking conditions. I also examined whether these features were related to sellers’ ratings of the message as a cheap shot.

As shown in Table 4, only two of these features appeared to covary meaningfully with buyer condition. Buyers instructed to engage in perspective-taking were more likely to refer to their own constraints and to express eagerness about working with the seller. These two features also appeared to be associated with seller reactions: messages with these features were significantly less likely to be judged as cheap shots. Another feature from my coding was also associated with seller perceptions: explicit references to fairness led messages to be less likely to be judged as cheap shots.

Correlates of cheap shot perceptions. An assumption throughout the present paper is that perceptions of a negotiation counterpart's rationale as a cheap shot rather than a fair and reasonable point have some meaning. I examined this idea in a final set of exploratory analyses, considering how seller's categorical and continuous judgments of a message as a cheap shot corresponded to other judgments, including negotiation measures (e.g., assumption of the buyer's reservation point, counteroffer to the buyer) and impressions of and attitudes about the buyer (e.g., positive impressions). Since I did not directly manipulate message perceptions, I cannot assume that evidence of covariance demonstrates causal links. However, I think such a causal chain is quite plausible (the buyer's offer amount is held constant across all messages and the message itself serves as the primary evidence sellers have of the buyer; I suspect that inferences and interpretations are initially drawn about the message and then about the buyer/messenger in terms of negotiation position and personality).

My analyses combined seller responses from all three of Study 7's conditions, focusing on the extent to which sellers saw the messages as cheap shots, regardless of the instructions given to buyers. (I conducted parallel analyses within each of the three conditions and found extremely similar results) As shown in Table 5, the results are consistent and strong, with both

mean differences and correlations showing clear correspondence between sellers' cheap shot judgments and other reports. Sellers seeing buyer messages as cheap shots tended to assume those buyers had higher reservation points (i.e., suggesting that the critiques was seen as a gambit rather than a sincerely held evaluation), made higher (i.e., less generous) counteroffers, and predicted higher settlement prices (favoring themselves rather than buyers). These sellers also expressed a much higher likelihood of walking away from the negotiation and lower likelihood of recommending the buyer to a friend. I averaged the two positive impression items (trustworthy/cooperative and helpful/considerate) into an aggregate positive impression measure ($\alpha = .83$) and averaged the four negative impression items (aggressive/competitive, stubborn/demanding, selfish/cold, and sneaky/devious) into an aggregate negative impression measure ($\alpha = .88$). As shown in the table, sellers seeing buyer messages as cheap shots had substantially less positive and more negative impressions of their counterparts.

Discussion

Study 7 yielded four key findings. First, it replicated the earlier empathy gap results using a measure of meta-perception, clarifying that not only do buyers employing critique rationales see their own messages as vastly more reasonable and fair than the sellers who receive them (as shown in Studies 5 and 6), but also that buyers wrongly believe that their seller counterparts will likewise see them as generally reasonable and fair. Second, messages from buyers instructed to engage in perspective-taking prior to employing critique rationales (compared to those simply instructed to craft critique rationales) were significantly less likely to be seen by sellers (offer recipients) as cheap shots. In other words, perspective-taking may partly mitigate backlash to criticism. Third, my exploratory coding of messages suggested that at least some of the benefits of buyers' perspective-taking were due to "content" features of their rationales. Specifically,

perspective-taking buyers appeared to be more likely to mention their own constraints and to express eagerness to reach a deal with the seller. It may be that these features lead sellers to attribute buyers' critique to non-hostile factors. Fourth, I explored how sellers' reactions and negotiating responses co-varied with perceiving buyer messages as cheap shots. Those seeing a buyer message as a cheap shot pressed back more in negotiation terms (e.g., more assertive counteroffers), expressed a greater likelihood of walking away, and had more negative impressions of buyers. I cannot conclusively isolate the causal role of cheap shot perceptions in these other reactions, but I see these results as consistent with the view that cheap shot perceptions are meaningful and may play an important role in shaping other reactions in bargaining.

General Discussion

A great deal of prior work suggests that the route to conflict resolution and negotiated settlements may often be disrupted by divergent views between the involved parties about what is fair and reasonable (e.g., Thompson & Loewenstein, 1992). A buyer's offer may be seen by a seller as offensively low. Or a divorce settlement proposed by one member of a couple may be seen by their soon-to-be-ex-partner as wildly ungenerous. I believe that such egocentric reactions apply not only to proposed *deal terms* but also to the *stories* that accompany them—such as a buyer's account for why they are offering a certain amount or a significant other's explanation for proposing a particular settlement.

In the present work, I considered a specific kind of rationale—*critique*, when a buyer criticizes what is being offered by a seller—that recent research suggests is not only commonly-used but also tends to backfire with considerable frequency (see Chapter 2). However, past work emphasized the consequences of these accounts and did not examine perceptions of the

rationales themselves, including whether sellers saw them as unfair and unreasonable (i.e., as cheap shots) and whether buyers anticipated or understood how sellers would see their messages. My first core prediction in the present work harnessed these perceptions to address a question left unanswered by prior work: Why are buyers so inclined to embrace an approach—critique—that so frequently backfires? I think at least part of the answer lies in a previously-undocumented egocentric perception gap: that buyers are vastly less likely than sellers to see critique rationales as cheap shots.

My second core prediction was that perspective-taking might mitigate some of the backlash to critique. I expected that counseling buyers to actively take the sellers' perspective while crafting a critique rationale would lead to sellers being less likely to see those messages as cheap shots.

A Buyer-Seller Chasm

Across three studies, I found substantial support for my first core prediction. Study 5 harnessed critique messages crafted by buyers in Chapter 2 that revealed backlash effects. New participants judged these messages from either a buyer or seller perspective; sellers were nearly 50 percent more likely than buyers (68% versus 46%) to see the messages as cheap shots rather than reasonable critiques. In Study 6, buyer participants generated their own critique rationales and judged whether they were cheap shots. A panel of seller participants was yoked to these buyers, judging the same rationales. Here, sellers were over twice as likely as buyers to see the messages as cheap shots (75% versus 31%). In Study 7, a panel of buyer participants generated critique rationales and reported meta-perceptions (whether they thought their seller counterparts would see the offers as cheap shots). As in the other studies, a panel of seller participants was yoked to these buyers, judging the same rationales. Sellers were considerably more likely to see

the messages as cheap shots than buyers expected them to be (76% versus 47%). In sum, my first prediction was supported across the studies: There appears to be a sizeable empathy gap between buyers and sellers for critique rationales in negotiations, with buyers vastly underestimating how likely sellers are to see these messages as cheap shots. I see this as casting great doubt on an alternative view that might suggest buyers know quite well how sellers see their overtures and embrace them nonetheless as part of the give-and-take of bargaining.

The Impact of Perspective-taking

My second core prediction was that buyer perspective-taking would mitigate some of sellers' backlash to critique. I tested this expectation in Study 7, directing some buyers to simply craft a critique rationale and directing other buyers to first take their seller counterpart's perspective, in advance of crafting a critique rationale. As expected, perspective-taking appeared to reduce cheap shot perceptions (in this case, by nearly a third, from 76% to 55%). However, messages from buyers using perspective-taking + critique were still nearly twice as likely as messages from buyers in a control condition to be seen by sellers as cheap shots (55% versus 28%). In other words, perspective-taking may reduce the likelihood of backlash to a critique, but risks of backlash still appear to be substantial.

Additional exploratory analyses pointed to some of the message features that might be involved in the perspective-taking effect. I coded a variety of features of buyers' critique rationales, identifying two content dimensions that appeared to be heightened when buyers were counseled to engage in perspective-taking and that were also associated with reduced backlash. Perspective-taking buyers were more likely to mention their own *constraints* and to express *eagerness* to reach a deal with the seller—and both dimensions were tied to a reduced likelihood of cheap shot perceptions. The apparent benefit of highlighting constraints is consistent with my

findings from Chapter 2 showing that constraint rationales often have benefits for buyers. I see both of these message features as potentially shaping seller attributions, leading them to ascribe buyer critiques (and accompanying ungenerous offers) to non-hostile factors.

Interestingly, I found that while perspective-taking appeared to mitigate seller backlash to critique, it did not eliminate the empathy gap. Indeed, buyers in the perspective-taking condition dramatically underestimated cheap shot judgments: Some 16 percent of buyers expected their critique messages to be seen as cheap shots, whereas 55 percent of these messages were actually seen as cheap shots by seller recipients. It could be that perspective-taking improves social judgment but that perspective-takers give themselves more credit than is due—an effect that may fit with emerging views of the downsides of perspective-taking (e.g., Sassenrath, Hodges, & Pfattheicher, 2016).

The Meaning of Cheap Shots

Stepping back, much of my argument turns on sellers' judgments of buyer critique rationales as being unfair and unreasonable cheap shots or being fair and reasonable critiques. My research has focused on what causes or mitigates these perceptions—and whether buyers effectively anticipate and understand sellers' perceptions. A more basic question is: Are such judgments meaningful? And do they have the potential to help scholars better understand the dynamics of bargaining and social exchange? My specific predictions could be supported but my larger account would have little value if these perceptions are epiphenomenal or incidental. Or, put bluntly, my results could be true but meaningless. I examined this issue with exploratory analyses focusing on how continuous and dichotomous cheap shot judgments covaried with other seller reactions. The results were even more striking than I had anticipated (see Table 5). Sellers seeing buyer messages as cheap shots tended to assume those buyers had higher reservation

points (i.e., they would be willing to pay more), made higher (less generous) counteroffers, predicted higher settlement prices (favoring themselves), and expressed a much higher likelihood of walking away from the negotiation. Sellers who saw buyer messages as cheap shots also had substantially less positive and more negative impressions of their counterparts and showed a lower willingness to recommend the buyer to another friend. To be clear, these correlational results do not establish causation. Moreover, it seems almost certain that halo effects and reciprocal inferences are operating in these kinds of judgments. Nonetheless, given my design (holding offer value constant and manipulating offer messages as the primary source of information about the buyer), I interpret these results as suggesting that sellers' inferences about buyer messages likely preceded and shaped other inferences and responses, including counteroffers, intentions to walk-away, and more general impressions. My conclusion is that cheap shot perceptions arguably matter a great deal. And, to me, the broader implication is clear: To fully understand the psychology of negotiation, including counterproposals, impasses, trust, and relational outcomes, we must understand how bargainers interpret and draw meaning from the accounts and stories their counterparts offer alongside their proposals.

Chapter 4: *When Attachment Shapes Seller Reactions*

Attachment—to other people, to ideas, to objects—is a pervasive and powerful part of our everyday lives. Feelings of ownership, possession, and endearment impact the way we experience our surroundings, interact with others, and make decisions (e.g., Baer & Brown, 2012; Gawronski, Bodenhausen, & Becker, 2007; Pierce, Kotstova, & Dirks, 2003). One noteworthy context in which attachment comes to life is social exchange, including negotiations where individuals may ultimately agree to give something up or over. Potential sellers in negotiations arrive with varying degrees of attachment to an object under negotiation. Owning or possessing something often leads to a bond between owner and object, with an object sometimes feeling like a part of the owner's extended self and being tied to the owner's identity (e.g., Beggan, 1992; Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Pierce et al., 2003). In the context of negotiations, research to date has focused on how these attitudes and feelings affect valuations and offer amounts. In particular, extensive scholarship on the *endowment effect* has found that sellers tend to value what they own far more than others do, often leading to demands seen as extreme or unacceptable by buyers (e.g., Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1990; Knetsch & Sinden, 1984; Morewedge & Giblin, 2015; Thaler, 1980). Such research shows that attachment may play a significant role in offer amounts as well as reactions ranging from impasses to satisfaction with deal terms. I find this prior work compelling—yet, I suspect that attachment may come to life in an important way in negotiations that previous work has not addressed.

Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated that negotiations are not merely an exchange of numbers. Rather, negotiators often surround their offers with rationales and accounts that seek to justify and explain the terms they are proposing. For instance, a potential buyer might critique a seller's antique table by highlighting scratches or a faded finish. Or a buyer interested in a lakeside cabin

may tell the current owner how she plans to preserve and care for it just the way it is. Although past work has shed light on how attachment impacts offer amounts, we know very little about how attachment governs how sellers would react to such rationales. Will the table-seller's attachment to the antique shape whether they show backlash to the buyer's criticisms? Will the cabin-owner's attachment to the property affect whether and how they engage with a buyer who presents herself as a "caretaker"? I believe that such effects often emerge—that the accounts buyers provide can evoke markedly different responses depending on the seller's degree of attachment. In the current research, I delineate two "account × attachment" effects and put them to empirical test. My results highlight previously unstudied dynamics that may have a dramatic effect on bargaining and that reveal new ways in which attachment plays out in daily life.

Critique Backlash

Like nearly any other social episode, negotiations implicate the self, including peoples' identities, face, and attachments (cf White, Tynan, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004). Different accounts that negotiators offer may work or backfire depending on how they interact with a counterpart's self-related concerns. In Chapter 2, I identified two rationales that buyers commonly employ in negotiations: *critique rationales* (involving critiques of the negotiated object) and *constraint rationales* (referring to the buyer's own limited resources). I found that critique rationales, despite their widespread use, often backfire whereas constraint rationales often yield some benefits. Although I did not isolate the role of attachment in those initial studies, I believe that attachment likely governs the impact of critique. In Chapter 4, I examine the *critique backlash effect*, predicting that attachment will magnify sellers' negative reactions to critique rationales.

Some past work is consistent with this expectation. For instance, prior research suggests that negotiators become less cooperative and more competitive when their social image or face is threatened (Brown, 1968; White et al., 2004). Furthermore, making critiquing comments about a counterpart's position or possession can lead the counterpart to feel insulted and resist making concessions (Tjosvold & Huston, 1978). When a seller is highly attached to an object under negotiation, they may take critiques as an attack on the self and respond more negatively.

Caretaker Advantage

Some negotiation accounts concern the future or fate of an object under negotiation, with buyers sometimes describing their plans for how they would treat or use something if they took possession of it. For instance, following my earlier example, a cabin buyer may describe their plans to preserve and care for the property in its existing form. Another buyer, in contrast, may share their intention to knock the cabin down and erect a different building in its place. Prior negotiation scholarship has paid little attention to such fate-related commentary; accounts of negotiation that emphasize economic value maximization might view such storytelling as irrelevant or cheap talk.

However, past work finds that people with strong attachment to their possessions experience a sense of responsibility and need to care for them (Dipboye, 1997; Korman, 1970). This suggests that, in negotiations, attached sellers will consider what a buyer intends to do with their object in the future. I, thus, expect a *caretaker advantage effect*: When sellers are highly attached to their object, they will feel greater concern for its fate and, as a consequence, favor buyers who offer to take good care of it in the future. Indeed, I suspect that, on balance, attached sellers will knowingly sacrifice economic value in anticipation that a buyer will be a suitable caretaker for their object.

Predictions and Plan of Study

I offer two predictions about the interaction between negotiator accounts and attachment. With the *critique backlash effect*, I predict that seller attachment to the object under negotiation will magnify their negative reaction to buyer critique. With the *caretaker advantage effect*, I predict that seller attachment to the object under negotiation will magnify their positive treatment of buyers who signal a readiness to preserve and care for the object. These effects are consistent with prior psychological work on attachment and face, but stand in contrast to views of negotiation as simple economic value maximization, which might dismiss buyer critiques or forecasts as irrelevant or meaningless.

To test the *critique backlash effect*, Study 8 presented a negotiation scenario to participants asked to adopt a seller role, experimentally manipulating buyer rationales and seller attachment while holding buyer offers constant. I expected that when seller attachment was high, buyers offering critique rationales would elicit more negative reactions from sellers (e.g., less generous counteroffers) than buyers employing constraint rationales. I expected this gap would be narrowed for sellers with lower levels of attachment.

To test the *caretaker advantage effect*, Study 9 presented a negotiation scenario to participants asked to adopt a seller role, experimentally manipulating seller attachment. Sellers reviewed offers from two buyers expressing different intentions for future use, with a “caretaking” buyer making a less generous offer than a “non-caretaking” buyer. I expected that highly-attached sellers would express greater preference for negotiating with the caretaking buyer and would give preferential treatment (e.g., more generous counteroffers) to them. I expected this gap would be narrowed for sellers with lower levels of attachment.⁶

⁶ I confirm that I have reported all measures, conditions, and data exclusions in all studies.

Furthermore, I sought to generalize these effects to naturally-occurring transactions in Study 10 by surveying recent car sellers about their experience interacting with buyers. Specifically, I asked these sellers about various factors (e.g., buyer characteristics, financial factors) that may have impacted their decision to engage with and sell to a particular buyer among the sea of numerous buyers in the market. In line with my previous theorizing, I predicted that attachment would affect the extent to which sellers favored buyers that expressed their intentions to preserve and care for the car.

My research holds both practical and theoretical implications. In practical terms, if my account is borne out, my work would suggest that buyers should carefully consider sellers' attachment to the object under negotiation as they craft and share their accounts. In terms of theory development, my work may reveal new ways in which the self and attachment are implicated in social exchange. Conversations that are nominally tug-of-wars about price or money may often be negotiations about the meaning and future of the object in play.

Study 8

Study 8 examined the predicted *critique backlash effect*. I predicted that sellers would react less favorably (e.g., make less generous counteroffers, view the buyer more negatively) to critique rationales compared to constraint rationales when they felt stronger attachment to the object. In contrast, I expected seller reactions to critique and constraint rationales to show little difference when their attachment to the object was limited. To explore this possibility, Study 8 manipulated attachment (low versus high) and offer rationale (constraint versus critique).

Method

Participants and design. A total of 201 participants responded to an online survey for payment through Amazon Mechanical Turk. A target sample of 200 was determined in advance

based on expectations of likely effect sizes and the expected share of cases passing attention checks, and data collection ended at the pre-determined target. Forty-one participants failed at least one of two attention check questions (e.g., with instructions to select the left-most option on a scale), or provided values inconsistent with understanding the survey materials (e.g., making a counteroffer that was higher than the price they originally listed the antique table for) and were, thus, excluded from the analyses. This left 180 U.S. adults in the sample (93 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.76$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.81$). I conducted sensitivity power analysis using *G*Power*. Given a sample size of 180, an alpha level of .05, and minimum power of .80 (Cohen, 1992), there is an 80% chance of detecting an effect size of $f = .25$. The experiment had a 2 (level of attachment: low, high) \times 2 (type of rationale: constraint, critique) between-subjects design.

Materials and procedure. After reviewing informed consent materials, participants were asked to imagine that they were selling an antique table. All participants were in a seller role, responding to offers made by a buyer counterpart.

Attachment manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two scenarios with different descriptions of how attached they felt to the table they were selling. In the high-attachment condition, participants read that they were “selling an antique table that you inherited from a close relative many years ago ... the table holds a lot of history and meaning for you as your relative carved, sanded, and painted the table by hand and passed it down to you as a gift.” In the low-attachment condition, participants read that they were “trying to sell an antique table that your neighbor left with you a few days ago. Your neighbor is moving away, so they tried to sell the table before their move but didn’t have the time. Your neighbor asked whether you would be willing to sell the table on their behalf... .”

Rationale manipulation. Half of the participants were randomly assigned to receive a constraint rationale from the buyer, which focused on the buyer's financial restrictions ("... I cannot afford to pay your asking price given my family's limited budget. ...we can only spend the amount we have saved up for this ... the price you are asking is above the limit of what I can afford"). The other half received a critique rationale ("... this table is not worth nearly as much as you claim it is. The color of the finish is washed out in spots. There are scratches all over the legs and damage that indicates it hasn't been carefully maintained. ..."). Across all conditions, participants were told that they posted an ad for their table, asking \$600, and that the buyer made an offer of \$500.

Instrumental outcomes. Participants were then asked to respond to the buyer's message and indicate their counteroffer ("What price proposal would you make in response to your counterpart's offer of \$500?"), their assumption of their counterpart's reservation price ("What do you think is the highest price your counterpart can pay?"), and their predicted settlement price ("If you reached a settlement with this person, what price do you think you would end up with?").

Relational outcomes. I also gauged participants' impressions of buyers, capturing judgments relevant to a bargaining context. Participants rated buyers on six pairs of adjectives ("stubborn, demanding," "aggressive, competitive," "helpful, considerate," "sneaky, devious," "trustworthy, cooperative," and "selfish, cold") on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*.

In addition to these measures, I asked participants to indicate how attached they felt to the table using two measures ("How attached do you feel to the antique table you are selling?" and

“How much meaning does the antique table have for you?”), using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*.

Results

As anticipated, participants in the high-attachment condition reported feeling significantly stronger attachment to the table they were selling (averaging across the two items; $M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.51$) than participants in the low-attachment condition ($M = 1.52$, $SD = .96$, $F(1, 178) = 495.47$, $p < .001$).

Instrumental outcomes. As shown in Figure 3, a very similar pattern of results, consistent with my expectations, emerged for all three of the instrumental measures (assumed reservation price, counteroffer, and anticipated settlement). To illustrate the results with the counteroffer measure, a two-way ANOVA with counteroffer as the dependent variable showed a significant level of attachment \times type of rationale interaction, $F(1, 176) = 3.85$, $p = .051$. Simple effect tests revealed that for participants in the high-attachment condition, buyers making critique rationales evoked less generous counteroffers ($M = 548.13$, $SD = 30.36$) than buyers making constraint rationales ($M = 529.64$, $SD = 31.59$), $t(176) = 3.01$, $p = .003$. In contrast, the type of rationale did not affect participants' counteroffer amounts when they were in the low-attachment condition (critique rationale: $M = 531.67$, $SD = 27.28$; constraint rationale: $M = 530.22$, $SD = 26.95$, $t(176) = .24$, $p = .81$). This same pattern of results for the interaction and the simple effects held across assumed reservation price and anticipated settlement (see Figure 3).

Relational outcomes. Relational outcomes showed the same effects as instrumental outcomes (Figure 3). I created a net evaluation measure (“net positive evaluation”) that subtracted negative evaluations (“aggressive, competitive”, “stubborn, demanding”, “selfish, cold”, “sneaky, devious”; $\alpha = .88$) from positive evaluations (“trustworthy, cooperative”,

“helpful, considerate”; $\alpha = .87$) to measure overall positivity. My results do not change when examining positive evaluations and negative evaluations separately.

A two-way ANOVA with net positive evaluation as the dependent variable showed a significant level of attachment \times type of rationale interaction, $F(1, 176) = 12.16, p = .001$. Simple effect tests revealed that when sellers felt highly attached to their table, they made less positive evaluations of buyers making critique rationales ($M = -.51, SD = 2.53$) compared to buyers making constraint rationales ($M = 2.40, SD = 1.67$), $t(176) = 6.44, p < .001$. In contrast, the type of rationale did not affect participants’ evaluation of buyers when they felt low attachment (critique rationale: $M = 1.20, SD = 2.17$; constraint rationale: $M = 1.88, SD = 2.02$), $t(176) = 1.52, p = .13$).

Discussion

Study 8 manipulated rationales and attachment, seeking evidence for the predicted *critique backlash effect*—that seller attachment to the object under negotiation would magnify negative reactions to buyer critique. My expectations were confirmed with significant interactions emerging across the dependent measures: assumed counterpart reservation prices, counteroffers, anticipated settlement values, and impressions. As in Chapter 2, critique (versus constraint) rationales led to worse instrumental and relational outcomes when attachment was high—but not when it was low.

Study 9

Study 9 explored the *caretaker advantage effect*, examining whether accounts reflecting different intentions for future use of the seller’s object generate different reactions from sellers with high- and low-attachment. I predicted that highly-attached sellers would express greater preference for negotiating with a “caretaking” buyer (i.e., a buyer signaling intentions to preserve

and care for the object) over a “non-caretaking” buyer (e.g., a buyer proposing to substantially transform or destroy the object). I did not expect sellers with limited attachment to their object to react differently to such accounts. Study 9 also explored a potential mediating role of sellers’ concern for the fate of the object in accounting for the link between feelings of attachment and preference for caretakers over non-caretakers.

Method

Participants and design. One hundred and twenty-two participants responded to an online survey for payment through Amazon Mechanical Turk. A target sample of 120 was determined in advance based on expectations of likely effect sizes and the expected share of cases passing attention checks, and data collection ended at the pre-determined target. Using the same attention and comprehension checks as in Study 8, 25 participants were excluded from the analyses. This left 97 U.S. adults in the sample (45 females; $M_{age} = 36.90$, $SD_{age} = 11.52$). I conducted sensitivity power analysis using *G*Power*. Given a sample size of 97, an alpha level of .05, and minimum power of .80 (Cohen, 1992), there is an 80% chance of detecting an effect size of $d = .58$. The experiment had a 2 (level of attachment: low, high) \times 2 (type of account: caretaker, non-caretaker) mixed factorial design. Attachment was a between-subjects factor and account was a within-subject factor.

Materials and procedure. After reviewing informed consent materials, participants imagined that they were selling an inherited cabin. All participants were in a seller role, responding to offers made by buyer counterparts.

Attachment manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two scenarios varying in attachment. In the high-attachment condition, participants read that they “still vividly remember how much time you spent at the cabin growing up ... and have continued to take great

care of it ... it has become your second home.” In the low-attachment condition, participants read that they “don’t have much memory of the place ... have barely spent any time at the cabin ... and your children barely know that it exists.” All participants then read that they decided to list the cabin for \$60,000 after taking into consideration the cabin’s condition and the price of similar cabins in the area (\$50,000 to \$70,000).

Account manipulation. Participants were then told that they found two messages in their inbox from two different buyers. In one message, the buyer made a caretaking account by emphasizing their purpose to find a cabin where they could spend quality family time (“My family and I have been looking for a charming cabin that we can spend our weekends at ...”) and their intention to maintain the cabin in its existing form (“... It looks like it has a great cozy feeling and we would want to preserve that just as it is.”). In the other message, a different buyer made a non-caretaking account, noting that they were looking to build a new home of their own (“I have been looking for a site to build my own home by the lake...”) and that they planned to tear down the participant’s cabin to replace it (“... the cabin will definitely have to go”). Both buyers made a counteroffer at the end of their message. Importantly, the non-caretaking buyer’s offer (\$52,000) was slightly higher—and thus economically more attractive to participants in the seller role—than the caretaker’s offer (\$50,000). To address possible order effects, I counterbalanced the order of the messages presented to participants so that half of the participants saw the caretaker’s message first and the other half saw the non-caretaker’s message first.

Choice of caretaker account. After reading the two messages, participants were asked to choose with whom they would like to negotiate (“If you could only respond to one of the buyers, which buyer would you choose to write back? This means that you would have to forego your

opportunity to negotiate with the buyer you do not choose.”). The choice between caretaking and non-caretaking buyer served as the primary dependent variable.

Instrumental and relational outcome. Participants then indicated their counteroffer, their assumption of the buyer’s reservation price, and their predicted settlement for each buyer (for both the caretaking and non-caretaking buyers, regardless of their choice noted earlier), as measured in Study 8. I also measured impressions using the same items as Study 8.

Concern for fate mediator. To better understand the potential link between attachment and the caretaker effect, I measured two possible mediating constructs. One of these captured *fate concerns*, gauging how much a seller cared about what happened to their object (“How much do you care about what happens to the cabin in the future?”). The other captured *expected future*, gauging whether they thought their object had a good/positive fate (measured with two questions, “If you end up selling your cabin to the buyer you selected, how good would you feel about this cabin now being owned by this person?” and “How positively do you feel about the fate of your cabin?”). Both of these constructs struck as plausible mediators; my analyses explored whether either of them showed evidence of mediation.

Finally, I asked participants to indicate how attached they felt to the cabin using two measures (“How attached do you feel to the cabin that you were selling?” and “How much meaning does the cabin have for you?”) at the end of the survey, using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *a great deal*.

Results

As anticipated, participants in the high-attachment condition reported feeling significantly stronger attachment to the cabin they were selling ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 2.21$) than participants in the low-attachment condition ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.27$), $F(1, 95) = 197.03$, $p < .001$.

Choice of caretaker account. A chi-square analysis revealed an effect of attachment on choice of caretaking versus non-caretaking buyer ($\chi^2 = 9.45, p = .002$), confirming my predicted *caretaker advantage effect*. Highly-attached sellers were much more likely to choose to negotiate with caretaking buyers ($M = 75.0\%$) compared to low-attachment sellers ($M = 44.4\%$). I conducted further chi-square analyses of participants' choices within each attachment condition. Highly-attached sellers showed significantly greater preference to negotiate with the caretaking buyer ($M = 75.0\%$) compared to the non-caretaking buyer ($M = 25.0\%$), $\chi^2 = 13.00, p < .001$. This was true even though the offer from the caretaking buyer was lower and, thus, economically less favorable to sellers than that tied to the non-caretaking account. As expected, less-attached sellers did not differ significantly in their preference between caretaking ($M = 44.4\%$) and non-caretaking buyers ($M = 55.6\%$, $\chi^2 = .56, p = .46$).

Looking beyond the dichotomous manipulation, I explored whether variance in participants' attachment to the cabin would correlate with their likelihood of choosing the caretaking buyer. Across conditions, I found that participants who reported higher attachment to their cabin were more likely to prefer the caretaker over the non-caretaker ($r = .45, p < .001$). I observed the same pattern when looking *within* each attachment condition as well: Participants' attachment to the cabin was significantly related to their likelihood of choosing the caretaker in both the high-attachment condition ($r = .32, p = .021$) and low-attachment condition ($r = .40, p = .006$).

Instrumental and relational outcomes. I compared participants' instrumental (e.g., counteroffer, predicted settlement) and relational responses (e.g., cooperative, demanding) to buyers that made caretaking and non-caretaking accounts. Given that the buyer making a caretaking account made a lower offer (\$50,000) compared to the buyer making the non-

caretaking account (\$52,000), I predicted that participants would make more concessions to the caretaker, regardless of how attached they felt to their cabin. Indeed, multiple paired-sample *t*-tests revealed that participants across both the high-attachment and low-attachment conditions expected to reach worse instrumental outcomes (i.e., made lower counteroffers, assumed lower reservation prices, estimated lower settlement prices) with caretaking buyers compared with non-caretaking buyers (all p 's < .001, see Figure 4). In other words, on average, participants choosing the caretaking buyer expected to get a worse deal compared to the non-caretaking buyer (i.e., it is not that they somehow expected to wrangle a better deal out of the caretaker). Furthermore, participants felt more positively and less negatively about buyers that made caretaking accounts than buyers that made non-caretaking accounts across both attachment conditions (all p 's < .001, see Figure 4).

Mediation by concern for fate. I pursued exploratory mediation analyses to gauge whether sellers' *fate concerns* (how much the seller cared about what happened to the cabin) and/or *expected future* (whether the seller thought the cabin had a positive fate) might explain the observed attachment effect. My speculated causal sequence was that (experimentally-manipulated) attachment might first manifest in attitudes and expectations about the future of the cabin under the ownership of the possible buyers, which would in turn shape preferences for the caretaking buyer. Following Hayes (2013), I computed the indirect effect using bias-corrected bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. Results showed that sellers' *fate concerns* fully mediated the effect of sellers' attachment on their likelihood to choose the caretaking buyer (*indirect effect* = 1.86, *SE* = .68, 95% CI [.87, 3.42]). The two measures capturing *expected future* did not mediate the attachment effect, neither when the measures were combined nor when examined separately.

Discussion

Study 9 manipulated attachment and accounts to examine the predicted *caretaker advantage effect*. I predicted and confirmed that sellers who were highly attached to their cabin had a much stronger preference for negotiating with a buyer offering a caretaking account over one offering a non-caretaking account. This was true even though the caretaker made a lower (i.e., less favorable) offer than the non-caretaker and sellers expected to get worse deals negotiating with the caretaker. Mediation analyses suggested that the effect of attachment on preference for caretakers might be accounted for by sellers' concerns for the cabin's fate.

It is worth noting that without a control condition, it is difficult to pinpoint whether the observed effects were driven primarily by the caretaker condition or the non-caretaker condition. Study 10 sought to partly address this limitation by capturing the magnitude of caretaker account usage on a continuous scale.

Study 10

In Studies 8 and 9, I found an effect of attachment on seller reactions to different types of buyer accounts. These studies suggest that attachment plays an integral role in affecting how sellers react to different types of explanations and stories. Such experimental manipulations of attachment in hypothetical scenarios can be helpful in establishing causal effects. However, this approach leaves open questions about how naturally-occurring attachment operates and whether effects such as caretaker advantage emerge in the negotiations over real objects with actual economic outcomes. In Study 10, I addressed these questions, capturing existing attachment in real life transactions by surveying recent car sellers about their experience interacting with buyers.

Cars are an essential part of the average Americans' everyday life with approximately 88 percent of households in the U.S. owning a car (Pew Research Center, 2015). Importantly, sellers may develop varying degrees of attachment to their car depending on their relationship and history with the car—and I expected such variance in attachment to have a profound effect on how sellers interacted with their potential buyers. Building off my previous findings, I sought to primarily examine the *caretaker advantage effect* in this study, focusing on factors that led to successful interactions and sales. I predicted that sellers would react more favorably to buyers that they expected to care for and cherish their car when they felt stronger attachment to the car, even when doing so sacrificed economic value for the seller. It is worth noting that I expect buyer critiques and attachment to have the strongest interaction effects on failed negotiation outcomes (i.e., when sellers walk away to pursue different buyers; “impasses”), which is what I find in Study 8. I focus on completed transactions in Study 10, mainly exploring the caretaker effect, but future work could fruitfully examine impasses and failed interactions to more clearly reveal critique backlash.

I sought to examine my predicted effects across three general categories of outcomes: *buyer selection*, *deal process*, and *deal outcome*.

Buyer selection. Buyer selection refers to *who* the sellers engaged with and ultimately sold their cars to. This category includes measures about the type of buyers that the seller decided to engage with, including specific characteristics about the buyer and financial factors that they assessed when choosing their buyers. I expected that attached sellers would report placing greater emphasis on the extent to which buyers expressed appreciation of the car (e.g., plan to care for the car, praise and compliment the car, avoid critiquing the car) in choosing who to engage with and sell their car to. On the other hand, I did not expect attachment to covary with

sellers' concern for financial characteristics and predicted that sellers would place greater relative importance on buyer characteristics.

Deal process. Deal process assessed how the transaction unfolded, including communication behavior (the frequency at which sellers communicated with the buyer in person, over the phone, and email) and the duration of the transaction (how long it took the seller to find a buyer). I expected that sellers with stronger attachment to their cars would communicate more directly and frequently with buyers (i.e., positive correlation between attachment and communication frequency). I also predicted an interactive effect of attachment and buyer characteristics on transaction duration—specifically, I expected that more highly attached sellers would take longer to sell their car when they placed greater emphasis on finding an appreciative buyer (e.g., express caretaking intentions, praise, avoid critique).

Deal outcome. This category included various measures related to the outcome of the transaction, including the final price and the objective and subjective measures of discounts that sellers gave to buyers. I predicted that seller attachment would interact with buyer characteristics to predict deal outcomes. More specifically, I expected more highly attached sellers to give greater discounts to buyers that expressed positive accounts (e.g., praise, caretaking) about their car.

Method

Participants and design. Similar to my previous studies, I conducted sample size analyses using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) and determined that I needed a sample of at least 172 participants for this study to attain adequate power ($1 - \beta > 0.80$). In order to capture the experience of vivid transactions made directly between buyers and sellers within a culturally similar demographic boundary, I targeted a representative sample of U.S.

individuals that had recently (within the past 2 years) sold their car directly (not through a dealer or broker) to another individual buyer (not to a dealer or broker).

As a first step, I created a screener survey on Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform that asked a number of questions about participants' recent purchasing and selling activity. Embedded within these general questions were more targeted questions that asked whether participants had sold their car within the past two years, followed by a few specific questions about the transaction (e.g., whether they used a dealer or broker, how long ago the car was originally purchased). Based on previous pilot work, I collected a total of 3,000 participants for this screener survey and sent a follow-up email (anonymously through TurkPrime) to 384 respondents that met the predetermined criteria (sold car within past 2 years directly to another individual), to which 318 sellers responded. Among the 318 sellers, I excluded those that failed to pass attention check questions (e.g., ignoring instruction to type the number nine twice, indicating different sale prices at the beginning and end of the survey), resulting in a final sample of 267 sellers (140 females; $M_{age} = 36.80$, $SD_{age} = 11.65$)

Materials and procedure. After reviewing informed consent materials, participants answered an array of questions about their car-selling experience.

Buyer selection. I sought to capture the extent to which sellers cared about *who* the buyer was and *how* the buyer talked about the car based on their level of attachment to the car. Specifically, sellers reported on the extent to which certain buyer characteristics affected their decision to engage with potential buyers, including their *caretaker intentions* (“...planned to use and care for the car in a way I liked”), *praise* (“...praised the car and seemed to genuinely appreciate it”), and *critique avoidance* (“...avoided criticizing the car”), on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (“This had no effect on my decision to engage...”) to 5 (“This had an extreme

effect on my decision to engage...”). Sellers also answered similar questions about the final buyer (the buyer that they ultimately ended up selling their car to) on five-point scales. They reported on the extent to which the final buyer expressed *caretaker intentions* (“use and care for the car in a good way after purchasing it”) and *praise* (“praised and complimented your car”), as well as *liking* (the extent to which the seller liked the buyer) and *impressions* (the extent to which the seller’s decision was “driven by your impressions about this buyer (what they were like and how they planned to use and care for the car)”). Sellers also reported on the extent to which buyers’ *financial factors* (“The extent to which they made a high or generous offer”) affected their decision to engage with and sell to a particular buyer, measured on a five-point scale. Finally, sellers reported the relative importance they placed on buyer impressions versus financial factors (the extent to which their decision was based on “financial factors ... versus impressions about the buyer”), ranging from 0 (“Financial factors”) to 100 (“Your impressions about the buyer”).

Deal process. Sellers reported on the frequency at which they communicated with the final buyer *in person*, over the *phone*, and *online* (via email or online messages), on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (“Not at all”) to 5 (“More than ten times”). Sellers also reported on *transaction duration*, indicating the number of months it took “from the time you first listed the car to the time you agreed on a final deal”.

Deal outcome. Sellers reported detailed information about their transaction including the *original list price*, and *final sale price*. To calculate the percentage discount sellers gave to their final buyers (*objective seller discount*), I subtracted *final sale price* from *original list price* and divided the difference by *original list price*. In addition to these objective measures, sellers reported the *subjective discount* they gave to the final buyer, a measure capturing the extent to

which sellers felt they gave the final buyer a discount because of how they felt about them, on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (“I gave them a significant discount because of how I felt about them”) to 5 (“I asked for significantly more because of how I felt about them”).

Attachment. Finally, sellers answered two questions that measured their degree of attachment to their car on a five-point scale. They were asked (1) how important and meaningful the car was to them, and (2) how emotionally attached they felt to the car. I created a composite attachment scale by averaging these two items with a Cronbach’s alpha of .92.

Results

Table 6 reports the descriptive statistics and correlations among the key variables.

Buyer selection. As predicted, seller attachment correlated strongly with various buyer characteristics (all p ’s < 0.001; see Table 6). This suggests that attachment affected the degree to which sellers paid attention to who the buyer was and what the buyer intended to do with their car when deciding whether to engage with and sell to that particular buyer. On the other hand, seller attachment did not correlate with their concern for financial factors, suggesting that highly attached sellers were no more or less likely than less attached sellers to care about buyers’ offer amounts when deciding who to interact with and sell to. Sellers also reported placing greater relative emphasis on buyer impressions over financial factors the more attached they felt to their car ($r = 0.23, p < 0.001$).

Deal process. As predicted, attachment correlated with the frequency at which sellers reported communicating with the buyer *in person* ($r = 0.14, p = 0.022$), but was not associated with the frequency of *phone* ($r = 0.098, p = 0.11$) or *online* ($r = 0.028, p = 0.65$) communications.

I next examined the interactive effect of attachment and appreciative buyer characteristics (caretaker intentions, critique avoidance, praise) on the number of months it took the seller to find a buyer (i.e., transaction duration). First, I tested the interactive effect of *attachment* × *caretaker intentions* (both mean centered) and found the predicted interactive effect on *transaction duration*, $b = 0.14, t(263) = 2.34, p = 0.02$, an effect that remained significant after controlling for the two other attachment and appreciative buyer characteristics interactions, $b = 0.15, t(261) = 2.47, p = 0.01$ (see Models 1-2 and 1-3 in Table 7). Further simple slope analyses revealed a positive association between *caretaker intentions* and *transaction duration* among high-attachment sellers (+1 *SD*), $b = 0.42, t(261) = 3.70, p < 0.01$, suggesting that highly attached sellers took longer to sell their cars when they cared more about buyers' caretaker intentions (i.e., they were more careful and attentive in finding the “right” buyer for their car). Put differently, among high-attachment sellers (+1 *SD*), a one standard deviation increase in the *caretaker intentions* index was associated with an additional 16 days in the seller's search for a buyer. On the other hand, the effect of *caretaker intentions* was null among low-attachment sellers (−1 *SD*), $b = 0.09, t(261) = 0.74, p = 0.46$.

I next examined the interactive effect of *attachment* × *critique avoidance* (both mean centered) and found a marginal effect on *transaction duration*, $b = 0.11, t(263) = 1.71, p = 0.088$, but the effect became null after controlling for the other attachment and appreciative buyer characteristics interactions, $b = 0.05, t(261) = 0.86, p = 0.39$, (see Models 2-2 and 2-3 in Table 7).

Finally, I tested the interactive effect of *attachment* × *praise* (both mean centered) but did not find a significant effect on *transaction duration*, both before, $b = 0.04, t(263) = 0.73, p = 0.46$, and after controlling for the other attachment and appreciative buyer

characteristics interactions, $b = -0.09$, $t(261) = -1.32$, $p = 0.19$ (see Models 3-2 and 3-3 in Table 7).

Deal outcome. Finally, I examined the objective and subjective discounts that sellers gave to their final buyers. As previously noted, I predicted that attachment and appreciative buyer characteristics (praise, caretaker intentions) would have an interactive effect on the extent to which sellers gave final buyers a discount from the original list price.

Objective seller discount. I first examined the interactive effect of *attachment* \times *final buyer praise* (both mean centered) on *objective seller discount*, the percentage discount sellers gave to their final buyers. As predicted, *attachment* \times *final buyer praise* had an interactive effect on *objective seller discount*, $b = 1.87$, $t(263) = 3.02$, $p = 0.003$. This effect remained significant after controlling for the *attachment* \times *final buyer caretaker intentions* interaction term, $b = 2.00$, $t(262) = 3.04$, $p = 0.003$ (see Models 1-2 and 1-3 in Table 8). Interestingly, simple slope analyses revealed that the effect of praise was null among high-attachment sellers (+1 *SD*), $b = 0.49$, $t(262) = 0.42$, $p = 0.67$, whereas praise was inversely associated with percentage discounts among low-attachment sellers (-1 *SD*), $b = -3.91$, $t(262) = -3.64$, $p < 0.001$. Finally, I found no interactive effect of *attachment* \times *final buyer caretaker intentions* (both mean centered) on *objective seller discount* before controlling for the *attachment* \times *final buyer praise* interaction, $b = 1.10$, $t(263) = 1.57$, $p = 0.12$, but found a marginal effect after controlling for *attachment* \times *final buyer praise*, $b = 1.31$, $t(262) = 1.76$, $p = 0.08$, (see Models 2-2 and 2-3 in Table 8). I discuss these unexpected findings in the Discussion.

Subjective seller discount. I first assessed the interactive effect of *attachment* \times *final buyer praise* (both mean centered) on *subjective seller discount* (the extent to which sellers reported that they gave the final buyer a discount or asked for more because of how they felt

about them), but did not find a significant effect neither before, $b = -0.022, t(263) = -0.77, p = 0.44$, nor after controlling for *attachment* \times *final buyer caretaker intentions*, $b = -0.009, t(262) = -0.30, p = 0.76$ (see Models 1-2 and 1-3 in Table 9). I next tested the interactive effect of *attachment* \times *final buyer caretaker intentions* (both mean centered) and found the predicted effect on *subjective seller discount*, $b = -0.088, t(263) = -2.76, p = 0.0061$. This effect remained significant after controlling for *attachment* \times *final buyer praise*, $b = -0.07, t(262) = -2.08, p = 0.04$ (see Models 2-2 and 2-3 in Table 9).

Discussion

The results of Study 10 demonstrate the integral role that natural attachment plays in seller reactions to buyer accounts in real-world transactions. I surveyed recent car sellers, asking an array of questions about their interaction with buyers in the market, including the type of buyers that they engaged with (*buyer selection*), the process and duration of their communication (*deal process*), and the economic and subjective outcomes of the transaction (*deal outcome*). Overall, I found that highly attached sellers spent longer searching for suitable buyers and were willing to forego monetary gains (i.e., give greater discounts) when they cared more about buyer intentions and characteristics (i.e., caretaker effect). Furthermore, I found no association between attachment and financial characteristics, suggesting that attachment more strongly impacts concerns about the *person* than price. This is contrary to prior work that suggests that highly attached sellers value and thus demand greater value from buyers (i.e., endowment effect).

It is worth reflecting on the interactive effect of *attachment* \times *final buyer praise*, which revealed that buyer praise led to significantly *less* discounts when sellers felt low attachment to their car (rather than it leading to more discounts among high-attachment sellers as predicted). Another way to interpret these findings is that praise led to a relative *premium* (buyers paid

relatively more) among low-attachment sellers. Taking a step back, it is reasonable to suspect that low-attachment may be the norm for used car owners—in fact, most owners in our sample reported viewing their cars as a method of transportation (93%) rather than something they owned for pleasure (4%). This then suggests the possibility that these low-attachment sellers, eager to maximize their profit, may have viewed a buyer’s praise as a signal of the buyer’s strong desire for the car and charged them a premium for it. It is also possible that a selective accessibility mechanism may be at play (Mussweiler & Strack, 1999; 2000a; Strack & Mussweiler, 1997)—that is, a buyer’s praise may highlight the car’s positive qualities for both the buyer and seller, which may then operate as an anchor for both parties and lead to the observed praise premium. However, when attachment is high, the seller’s motivation to extract maximum value might run up against positive feelings about finding a suitable buyer. Given the market norms, these sellers may not necessarily offer a discount to buyer praises, but they may stop seeking high premiums.

General Discussion

Every day, knowingly or not, our thinking and behavior are shaped by the attachment we feel toward the things around us. When we are attached to an idea we have generated, we are more likely to take offense in a colleague’s attempt to eliminate aspects of it (Baer & Brown, 2012). When we are attached to an object, we are more likely to overvalue it, often leading us to view a potential buyer’s offer as ungenerous and unacceptable (e.g., Morewedge & Giblin, 2015). Such feelings of attachment have material consequences in various social episodes, such as rejecting a colleague’s helpful suggestion or walking away from a potentially valuable deal. Although past work has made great inroads in revealing the impact of attachment on valuations and offer amounts, the literature remains largely silent on how attachment may come to life in

other important features of negotiations—including the accounts negotiators employ in the course of bargaining.

Emerging evidence suggests that the stories we tell matter, affecting both relational and instrumental outcomes in negotiations (Bhatia, Chow, & Weingart, 2019; Bowles & Babcock, 2013; Lee & Ames, 2017; Trötschel, Loschelder, Höhne, & Majer, 2015). Importantly, rationales often implicate peoples' identities, as owning or possessing an object often leads to the object feeling like a part of the owner's extended self. Thus, I suspected that attachment would have a particularly potent effect on reactions to negotiator rationales, as different accounts may work or backfire depending on how they interact with one's self-related concerns.

The present chapter examined two primary predictions about the interaction between attachment and negotiator accounts. The first concerned a *critique backlash effect*. I predicted that attachment would magnify sellers' negative reactions to critique rationales (involving critiques of the negotiated object) compared to constraint rationales (highlighting the buyer's limited resources). To test this, Study 8 presented a negotiation scenario to participants adopting a seller role. I experimentally manipulated buyer rationales (critique, constraint) and seller attachment (low, high) while holding buyer offers constant. As expected, I found that sellers reacted less favorably (e.g., made less generous counteroffers, viewed the buyer more negatively) to critique rationales than constraint rationales when they felt stronger attachment to the object. In contrast, this gap generally disappeared—sellers showed little difference to critique and constraint rationales—when they felt limited attachment.

Study 9 sought evidence of a *caretaker advantage effect*. I predicted that attachment would magnify sellers' positive treatment of buyers who signaled an intention to preserve and take care of the object (“caretaker”) over those who did not (“non-caretaker”). To test this, Study

9 presented a negotiation scenario to participants asked to adopt a seller role, experimentally manipulating buyer accounts (caretaker, non-caretaker). Sellers reviewed offers from two buyers expressing different intentions for future use, with the caretaker making a less generous offer than the non-caretaker. As predicted, I found that attached sellers (but not less-attached ones) overwhelmingly preferred to negotiate with the caretaker over the non-caretaker, even though they expected to get a worse deal from them. Furthermore, exploratory mediation analyses suggested that the effect of attachment on preference for caretakers might be accounted for by sellers' concern for the fate of their object.

Finally, I surveyed recent car sellers in Study 10 to capture naturally existing attachment in real-life transactions and found attachment to have an integral effect on how sellers navigated their negotiations. Consistent with my previous experimental evidence, I found a *caretaker advantage effect* in naturally-occurring used car transactions: Sellers gave preferential treatment to buyers that praised their cars or expressed caretaker intentions when they felt greater attachment to their cars. On the other hand, attachment did not affect the extent to which sellers reacted to financial aspects of the negotiation. Notably, I see my survey of used-car sellers as a conservative test of my hypothesis with the majority of sellers reporting that they mainly used their car for transportation processes. I believe the observed effects would magnify with objects that sellers feel greater personal connection to, such as their houses or handmade items. Nonetheless, the strong caretaker effects observed in this context is suggestive of a greater phenomenon.

In sum, the present studies suggest that attachment plays an influential role in how sellers react to various buyer overtures. When highly attached, sellers displayed a markedly negative reaction to buyers offering critique rationales (*critique backlash effect*) and a markedly positive reaction to buyers signaling a readiness to preserve and care for the object (*caretaker advantage*

effect). My findings also suggest an important boundary to the effects of critique identified in the previous chapters. When a seller's personal attachment is low (e.g., an agent acting on a seller's behalf), buyers' critique may lead to limited backlash.

More generally, it seems clear that seller attachment varies—and this work suggests that buyers should bear in mind their counterpart's attachment as they craft and share their accounts. An account that threatens a seller's identity by criticizing the quality or threatening the future of their object may backfire when a seller is highly attached to, and thus strongly identifies with, the object under negotiation. In contrast, an account that signals a buyer's intention to preserve the future of the object may lead to preferential treatment when a seller is highly attached.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In most cases, negotiations are not solely an exchange of numbers. Rather, negotiators often surround their offers with explanations, accounts, and rationales that seek to justify, explain, and legitimize whatever terms they are proposing. Some negotiations feel more like a battle of stories than a tug-of-war over numbers. But do these stories matter? If so, how, why, and when? Surprisingly little scholarship has examined these questions and the evidence that does exist seems inconclusive. Some past work indicates that accounts are often dismissed by recipients as “cheap talk” or “window dressing” or are otherwise irrelevant. Other work suggest that accounts may often backfire, activating defenses and evoking reactance, leading to worse outcomes than no story at all. Some recent research reveals that certain kinds of accounts and framing might have benefits.

In this dissertation, I have proposed, tested, and demonstrated that the stories we tell matter—significantly affecting our economic and relational outcomes. In Chapter 2, I made a meaningful distinction between two commonly-used buyer rationales—constraints and critiques—and found that constraints often yield benefits whereas critiques often backfire. In Chapter 3, I examined why buyers frequently employ rationales such as critiques that regularly backfire, and shed light on a previously undocumented empathy gap at work—buyers tend to think their critiques are reasonable, often overlooking seller cheap shot reactions, triggering backlash. Finally, I examined the role of attachment in Chapter 4 and found that attachment plays a critical role in shaping how sellers react to buyer accounts.

Stepping back, I see these results yielding broader implications about the core dynamics at play in the process of social exchange. I believe that an individual’s reaction to a counterpart’s rationale is largely driven by the extent to which that rationale *validates* or *threatens* the

individual's *appraisal* (i.e., evaluation, attitude, feeling) of the target of discussion (e.g., the object under negotiation, one's self-concept, ideology) (see Figure 5). In negotiations, rationales may not necessarily evoke strong reactions if they do not activate or have clear implications for the recipient's appraisal of the object. Likewise, if the recipient does not hold strong appraisals of the object, a rationale is unlikely to be provocative. However, I believe certain rationales can evoke consequential reactions, both positive and negative, if they activate and bear on a recipient's strongly-held appraisal of the object under negotiation (see Figure 5).

In Chapters 2 and 4, I found a strong backlash effect when sellers held positive appraisals of the object that the buyers critiqued. The backlash was stronger when sellers held stronger appraisals (i.e., high attachment to the object) and weaker when sellers held weak appraisals (i.e., low attachment to the object; see "Critique backlash" in Figure 6). On the other hand, sellers reacted favorably when buyer rationales validated seller appraisals (e.g., of the object as valuable and deserving care; Chapter 4). By offering to preserve and take good care of the seller's object, buyers validated the seller's appraisal of the object's sentimental value, leading to positive seller reactions (see "Caretaker effects" in Figure 6). Sellers were also more accommodating of buyers that focused on their own limitations in resources (i.e., constraints) rather than pointing out the object's flaws, likely seeing these rationales as a validation of their appraisal of the object's worth (Chapter 2). Furthermore, I found an information boundary effect of critique backlash when sellers held weak appraisals of the value of their object. That is, sellers were more amenable to relying on buyer critiques as a source of valid information about their object when buyer critiques were neither highly consistent nor inconsistent with their weakly held appraisal of the object's worth (Chapter 2; see "Information boundary" in Figure 6).

This framework has implications for future work as well. Given the effects that buyer appraisals or threats of seller appraisals have on seller reactions, it naturally raises questions about the factors that lead sellers to have stronger or weaker appraisals of an object. For instance, who is more likely to feel strong attachment to their objects, and when and why? Future work could examine such antecedents to appraisals and explore why these appraisals emerge and how they are sustained or overturned. This work also raises questions about what other rationale features (other than caretaking, critique, etc.) may provoke validation or threat. My findings suggest that sellers react especially strongly to rationales that are highly consistent or inconsistent with their strongly held appraisals. This then opens up a wide range of possibilities of features that may validate or threaten a seller's appraisal based on the different types of appraisals they may hold (e.g., evaluation, feeling, attitude). Finally, this work invites extension to other roles beyond the seller, and to other contexts beyond negotiations. I expect the appraisal/validation framework to apply to a wide range of persuasion contexts regardless of role, and look forward to exploring such avenues in the future.

Overall, the ideas and findings presented in this research emphasize the notion that negotiations and social exchange are more than transactions of economic value. Part of what is negotiated and implicated at the table are appraisals and identities. Negotiations can sometimes be as much about truth and meaning as they are about dollars and deal terms. These subjective dynamics may often hold tremendous stakes for those involved.

Figures

Figure 1. Frequency of Constraint and Critique Rationale Usage in Study 1

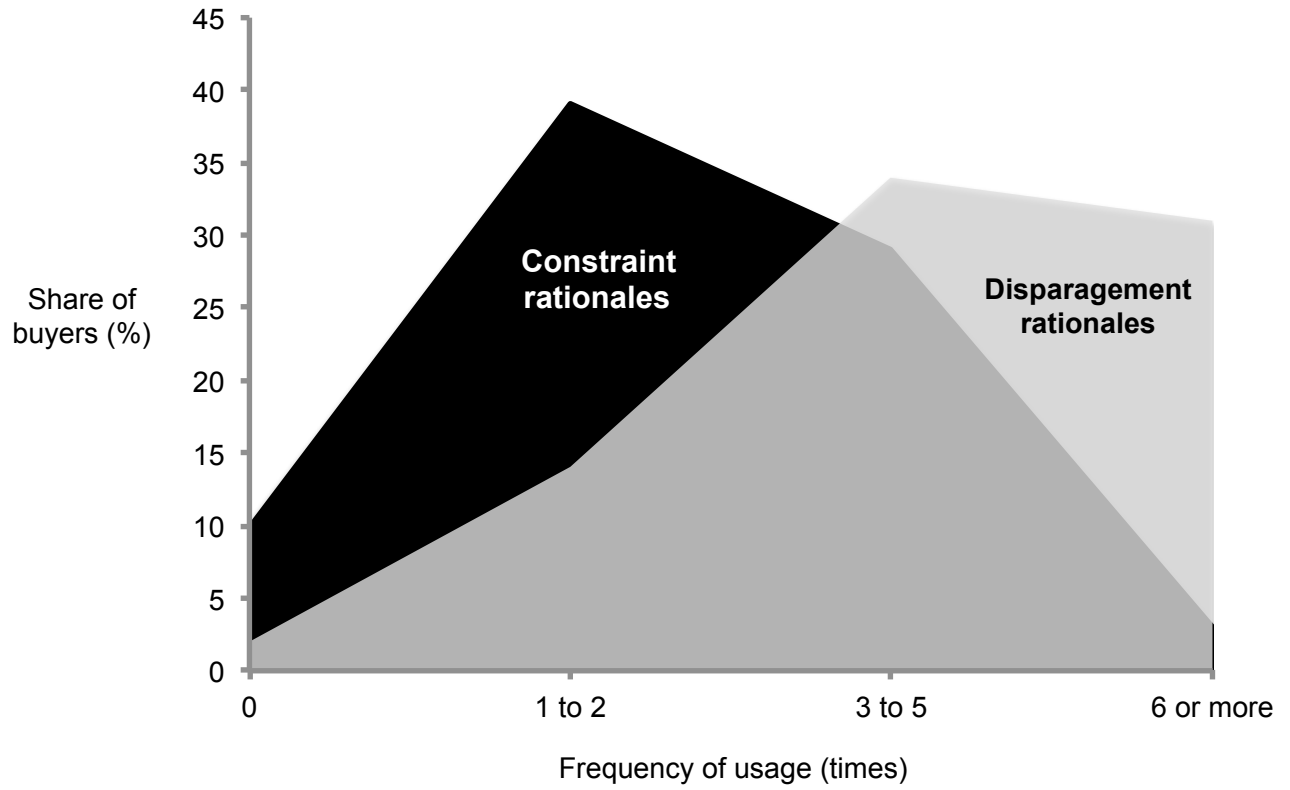
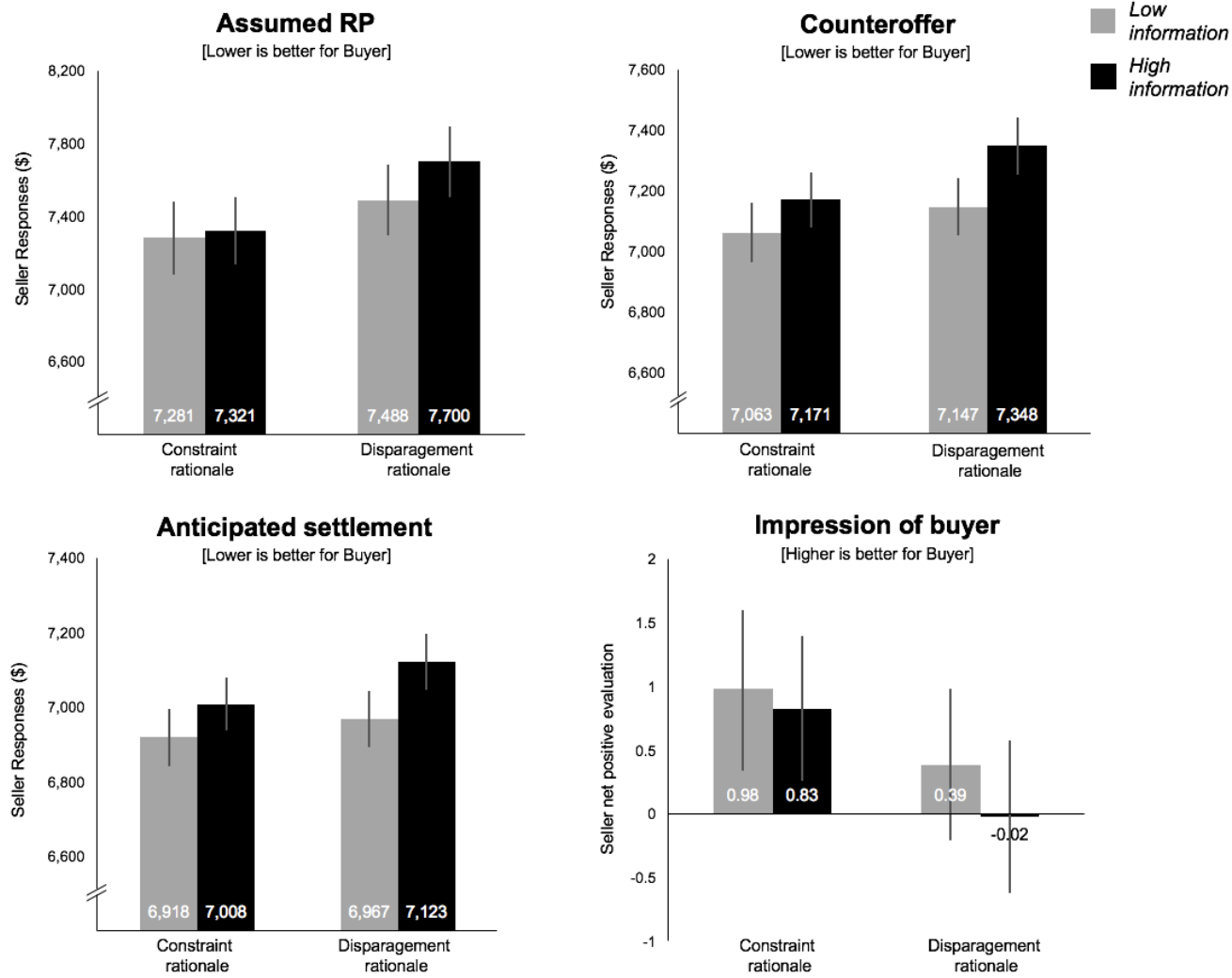
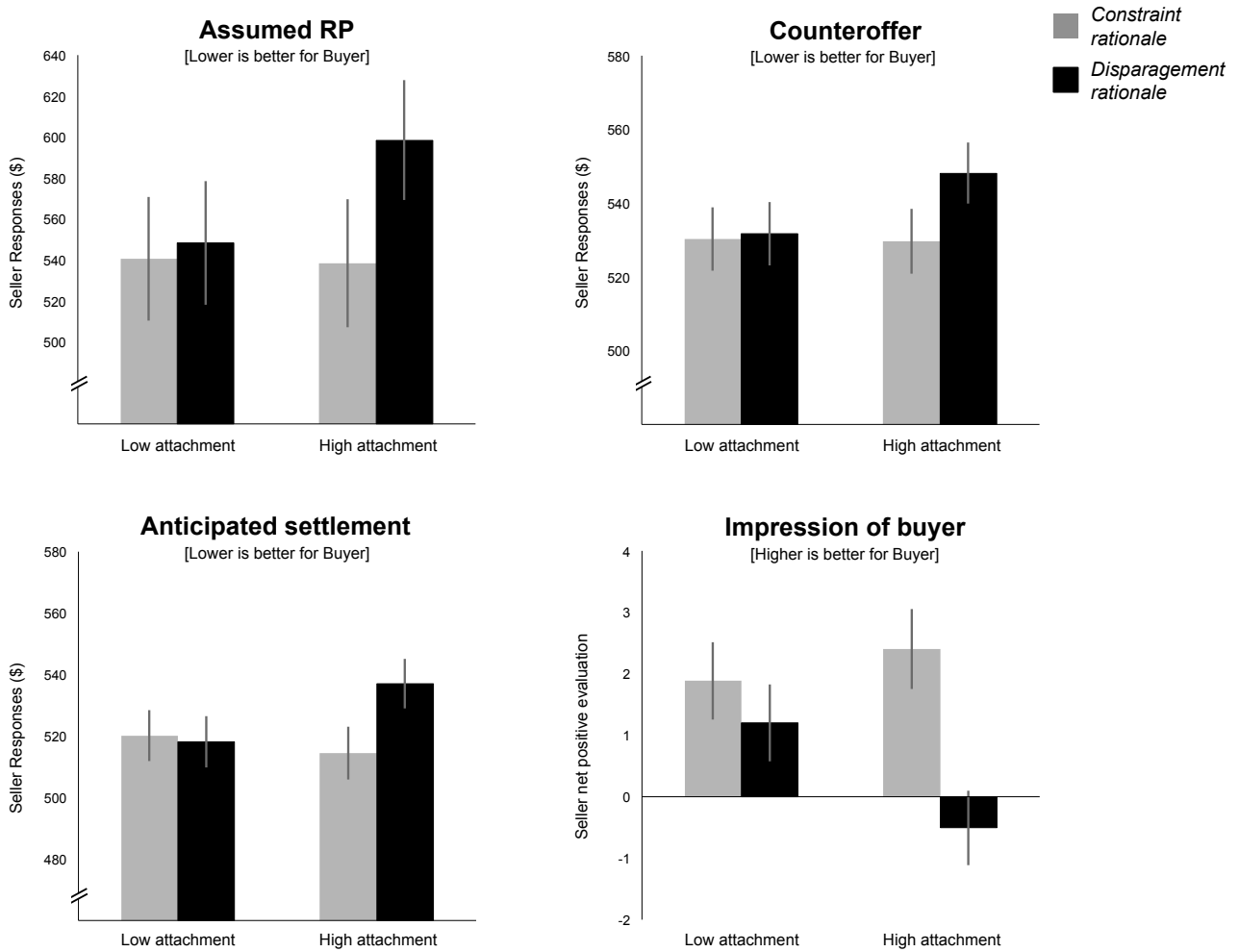


Figure 2. Graphs for Outcomes by Rationale and Market Information in Study 4



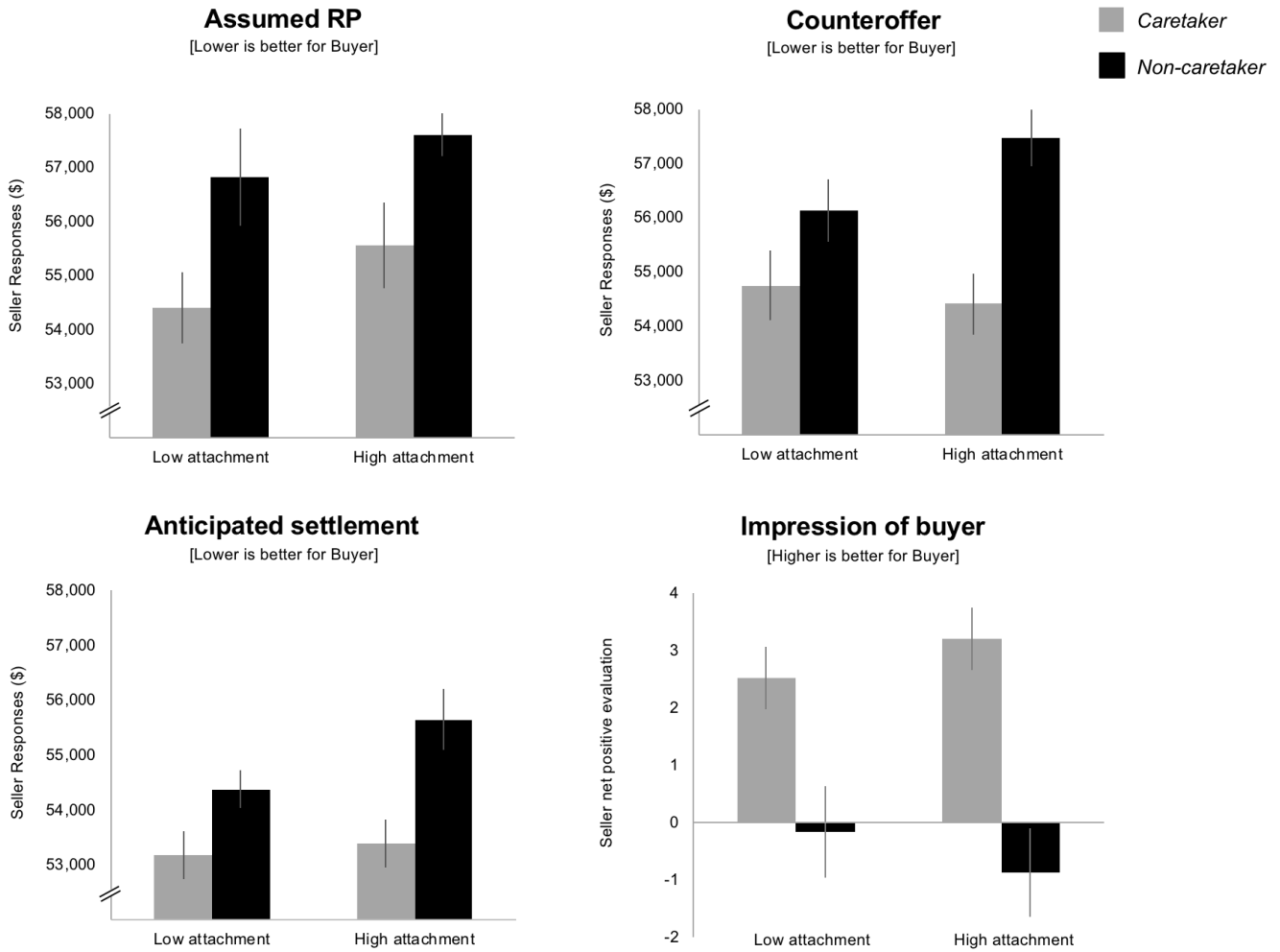
Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Assumed RP = Seller assumptions of buyer reservation price. Net Positive Evaluation = Negative Evaluations subtracted from Positive Evaluations.

Figure 3. Graphs for Outcomes by Rationale and Attachment in Study 8.



Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Assumed Counterpart RP = Seller assumptions of buyer reservation price. Net Positive Evaluation = Negative Evaluations subtracted from Positive Evaluations

Figure 4. Graphs for Outcomes by Account and Attachment in Study 9



Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Assumed Counterpart RP = Seller assumptions of buyer reservation price. Net Positive Evaluation = Negative Evaluations subtracted from Positive Evaluations

Figure 5. Diagram of Validation or Threats of Appraisals on Rationale Reactions

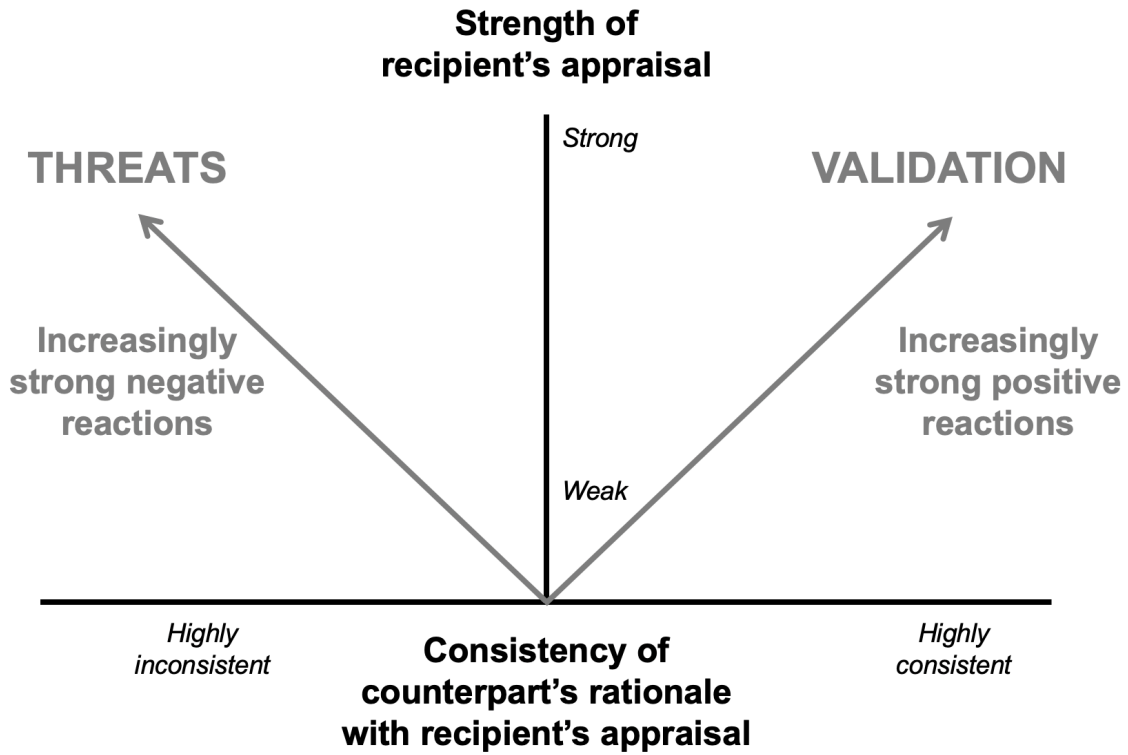
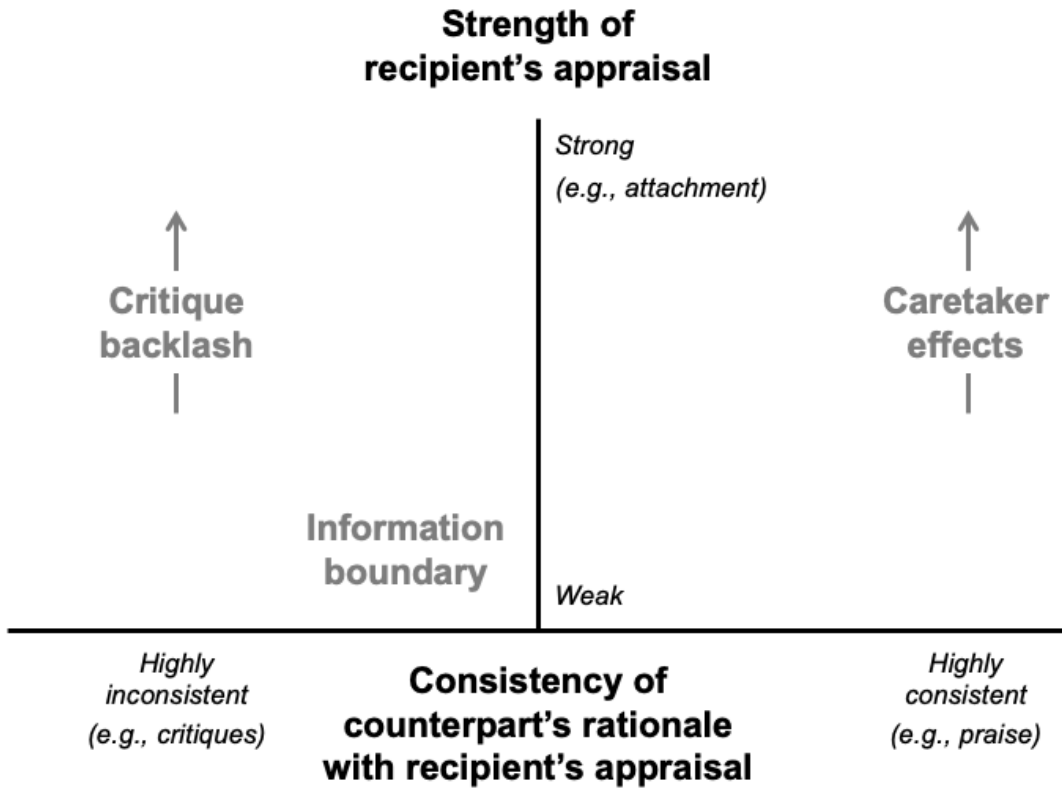


Figure 6. Diagram of Strength and Consistency of Appraisals on Rationale Reactions



Tables

Table 1. Summary of Outcomes by Rationale Condition in Study 2

| | Counterpart rationale condition | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Constraint | Control | Disparage |
| Instrumental outcomes | | | |
| Assumed counterpart RP (\$) | 601.8 (73.2) _a | 651.3 (76.7) _b | 633.7 (75.4) _b |
| Counteroffer (\$) | 657.5 (60.5) _a | 680.0 (63.8) _b | 686.4 (59.0) _b |
| Anticipated settlement value (\$) | 629.0 (62.1) _a | 647.0 (66.8) _a | 644.6 (62.7) _a |
| Relational outcomes | | | |
| <i>Positive evaluation</i> ($\alpha = .78$) | 4.08 (0.93)_b | 3.78 (1.17)_b | 3.17 (1.00)_a |
| Trustworthy, Cooperative | 4.18 (1.10) _b | 3.79 (1.30) _b | 3.31 (1.12) _a |
| Helpful, Considerate | 3.98 (1.08) _b | 3.74 (1.19) _b | 3.03 (1.19) _a |
| <i>Negative evaluation</i> ($\alpha = .86$) | 2.80 (1.32)_a | 3.07 (1.23)_a | 3.83 (1.20)_b |
| Aggressive, Competitive | 3.32 (1.85) _a | 3.79 (1.58) _a | 4.78 (1.44) _b |
| Stubborn, Demanding | 2.72 (1.50) _a | 3.09 (1.51) _a | 3.90 (1.59) _b |
| Selfish, Cold | 2.39 (1.40) _a | 2.72 (1.35) _a | 3.34 (1.53) _b |
| Sneaky, Devious | 2.79 (1.60) _{ab} | 2.69 (1.34) _a | 3.29 (1.48) _b |

Note. Values in parentheses are standard deviations. Means in rows that share a subscript letter do not differ by $p \leq .05$ in a two-tailed t test. RP = reservation price (i.e., sellers' assumptions about buyer limits). Positive and negative evaluation variables represent averages of specific items, with alpha values showing scale reliability.

Table 2. Summary of Outcomes by Rationale Condition in Study 3

| | Counterpart rationale condition | | |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | Constraint | Control | Disparage |
| Instrumental outcomes | | | |
| Assumed counterpart RP (\$) | 17,264.7 (1,426.1) _a | 17,605.3 (1,429.2) _a | 18,361.1 (1,402.1) _b |
| Counteroffer (\$) | 17,058.8 (1,050.0) _a | 17,563.2 (1,273.5) _a | 18,375 (1,375.2) _b |
| Anticipated settlement value (\$) | 16,911.8 (839.1) _a | 17,250.0 (1,038.1) _a | 18,116.7 (1,240.4) _b |
| Impasse | 2.24 (1.50) _a | 3.08 (1.48) _b | 4.00 (1.99) _c |
| Relational outcomes | | | |
| <i>Positive evaluation</i> ($\alpha = .87$) | 4.97 (1.22)_c | 4.36 (1.16)_b | 3.24 (1.12)_a |
| Trustworthy, Cooperative | 5.03 (1.24) _b | 4.53 (1.20) _b | 3.25 (1.20) _a |
| Helpful, Considerate | 4.91 (1.40) _c | 4.18 (1.29) _b | 3.22 (1.22) _a |
| <i>Negative evaluation</i> ($\alpha = .89$) | 2.13 (1.03)_a | 2.89 (1.26)_b | 4.14 (1.24)_c |
| Aggressive, Competitive | 2.65 (1.39) _a | 3.47 (1.84) _b | 4.83 (1.40) _c |
| Stubborn, Demanding | 2.26 (1.16) _a | 3.13 (1.47) _b | 4.39 (1.38) _c |
| Selfish, Cold | 1.76 (1.18) _a | 2.39 (1.35) _a | 3.64 (1.52) _b |
| Sneaky, Devious | 1.82 (1.19) _a | 2.58 (1.50) _b | 3.69 (1.69) _c |
| Recommend | 5.09 (1.38) _b | 4.53 (1.27) _b | 3.58 (1.87) _a |

Note. Values in parentheses are standard deviations. Means in rows that share a subscript letter do not differ by $p \leq .05$ in a two-tailed t test. RP = reservation price (i.e., sellers' assumptions about buyer limits). Positive and negative evaluation variables represent averages of specific items, with alpha values showing scale reliability.

Table 3. Seller Judgments of Cheap Shots by Buyer Condition in Study 7

| | Buyer condition | | |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Critique | Critique + Perspective-taking | Control |
| Proportion of sellers judging rationale as a cheap shot | 75.5% (37 of 49) | 54.9% (28 of 51) | 27.8% (15 of 54) |
| Proportion of buyers reporting meta-perception of seller judgment as cheap shot | 46.9% (23 of 49) | 15.7% (8 of 51) | 7.4% (4 of 54) |
| Seller ratings: judging rationale as a cheap shot | 5.02 (1.57) | 4.12 (1.87) | 3.15 (1.72) |
| Buyer ratings: meta-perception of seller judgment as cheap shot | 4.37 (1.27) | 2.86 (1.43) | 2.24 (1.08) |

Note. For ratings, top value (not in parentheses) shows mean rating on a seven-point scale; values in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 4. Features of Rationale Messages by Buyer Condition in Study 7

| | Features of rational messages | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| | Gratitude | Praise | Fairness | Constraints | Eagerness |
| <i>Share of messages with feature</i> | | | | | |
| Critique condition | 57% | 63% | 16% | 12% | 43% |
| Critique + Perspective-taking condition | 59% | 57% | 24% | 27% | 65% |
| Chi-squared test between conditions | .03 | .43 | .81 | 3.61 [†] | 4.80* |
| <i>Ratings on cheap shot scale (means and standard deviations)</i> | | | | | |
| When feature was present | 3.59 (1.70) | 3.45 (1.76) | 2.90 (1.55) | 2.80 (1.96) | 3.20 (1.90) |
| When feature was not present | 3.52 (1.92) | 3.72 (1.83) | 3.72 (1.81) | 3.75 (1.70) | 3.98 (1.56) |
| <i>t</i> -test between present and not-present | .17 | .75 | 2.12* | 2.17* | 2.21* |
| <i>Share of messages categorized as cheap shot with dichotomous measure</i> | | | | | |
| When feature was present | 65.5% | 61.7% | 45.0% | 50.0% | 53.7% |
| When feature was not present | 64.3% | 70.0% | 70.0% | 68.8% | 78.3% |
| Chi-squared test between present and not-present | .02 | .73 | 4.40* | 2.47 | 6.59* |

Note. * two-tailed $p < .05$, [†] two-tailed $p < .10$.

Table 5. Cheap Shot Judgments and Negotiation Measures in Study 7

| <i>Sellers' reports</i> | Means (Standard deviations) | | Correlation with continuous cheap shot scale rating |
|--|---|--|---|
| | Sellers judging message as a cheap shot | Sellers judging message as a reasonable critique | |
| Assumed buyer reservation point (lower values favor buyer) | 19,025.00 (1,813.98) | 17,844.59 (1671.53) | .31** |
| Counteroffer to buyer (lower values favor buyer) | 18,934.38 (828.43) | 17,871.62 (1,140.96) | .51** |
| Predicted settlement price (lower values favor buyer) | 18,318.74 (800.46) | 17,306.08 (856.60) | .53** |
| Likelihood of walking away | 4.65 (1.63) | 2.80 (1.42) | .58** |
| Positive impression of buyer | 2.89 (1.06) | 4.40 (1.01) | -.68** |
| Negative impression of buyer | 4.54 (1.16) | 2.91 (1.29) | .61** |
| Likelihood of recommending buyer to a friend | 3.18 (1.57) | 4.31 (1.36) | -.44** |

Note. Means compare values from 80 sellers judging buyer messages as a cheap shot with 74 sellers judging buyer messages as a reasonable critique. All two-tailed *t*-tests of mean differences in first two columns significant at $p < .01$. Correlations are with the seven-point cheap shot measure across all sellers (i.e., degree to which seller saw the message as a cheap shot).

TABLE 6. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations in Study 10

| No. | Variables | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|-----|---|-------|-------|---------|----------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|---------|--------|---------|----------|----------|---------|
| 1 | <i>Attachment</i> | 2.62 | 1.1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | <i>Caretaker intentions (GB)</i> | 2.17 | 1.26 | 0.352** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | <i>Praise (GB)</i> | 2.64 | 1.28 | 0.223** | 0.599** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | <i>Critique avoidance (GB)</i> | 2.25 | 1.23 | 0.202** | 0.418** | 0.559** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | <i>Financial factors (GB)</i> | 3.58 | 1.24 | -0.029 | -0.103 | 0.017 | 0.089 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | <i>Caretaker intentions (FB)</i> | 3.62 | 1.1 | 0.194** | 0.235** | 0.172** | -0.035 | 0.095 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | <i>Praise (FB)</i> | 3.17 | 1.24 | 0.230** | 0.263** | 0.366** | 0.194** | 0.047 | 0.402** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | <i>Liking (FB)</i> | 3.81 | 0.99 | 0.203** | 0.266** | 0.308** | 0.088 | -0.018 | 0.449** | 0.440** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | <i>Impressions (FB)</i> | 2.59 | 1.35 | 0.327** | 0.503** | 0.441** | 0.289** | -0.158** | 0.285** | 0.426** | 0.522** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | <i>Relative impressions (FB)</i> | 33.42 | 30.11 | 0.225** | 0.443** | 0.336** | 0.178** | -0.207** | 0.253** | 0.251** | 0.370** | 0.612** | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | <i>Financial factors (FB)</i> | 3.62 | 1.31 | -0.035 | -0.222** | -0.166** | -0.044 | 0.380** | 0.009 | -0.027 | -0.107 | -0.223** | -0.502** | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | <i>In person</i> | 2.67 | 0.8 | 0.140* | 0.108 | 0.096 | 0.016 | -0.178** | 0.096 | 0.175** | 0.149* | 0.197** | 0.209** | -0.170** | | | | | | | |
| 13 | <i>Phone</i> | 2.31 | 0.86 | 0.098 | 0.054 | -0.005 | -0.036 | 0.121* | -0.012 | 0.175** | 0.073 | 0.160** | 0.099 | -0.108 | 0.265** | | | | | | |
| 14 | <i>Online</i> | 2.37 | 1.14 | 0.028 | 0.032 | 0.094 | 0.082 | 0.142* | 0.071 | 0.166** | 0.061 | 0.05 | 0.002 | 0.139* | -0.019 | -0.08 | | | | | |
| 15 | <i>Transaction duration (in months)</i> | 1.53 | 1.48 | 0.115 | 0.234** | 0.131* | 0.110 | 0.054 | -0.021 | 0.133* | -0.037 | 0.045 | -0.001 | 0.016 | 0.115 | 0.137* | 0.056 | | | | |
| 16 | <i>Original list price (in \$)</i> | 4,285 | 4,425 | 0.025 | 0.048 | 0.031 | 0.034 | 0.162** | 0.084 | 0.204** | 0.082 | 0.044 | -0.065 | 0.08 | 0.033 | 0.190** | 0.05 | 0.126* | | | |
| 17 | <i>Final sale price (in \$)</i> | 3,718 | 4,127 | 0.025 | 0.041 | 0.026 | 0.024 | 0.161** | 0.071 | 0.200** | 0.067 | 0.037 | -0.075 | 0.077 | 0.032 | 0.179** | 0.04 | 0.092 | 0.991** | | |
| 18 | <i>Objective seller discount (in %)</i> | 16.79 | 15.72 | -0.077 | -0.046 | -0.062 | -0.077 | -0.062 | -0.09 | -0.149* | -0.113 | -0.038 | 0.027 | 0.036 | -0.033 | 0.015 | -0.017 | 0.194** | -0.220** | -0.306** | |
| 19 | <i>Subjective seller discount</i> | 2.61 | 0.72 | -0.081 | -0.173** | -0.144* | 0.001 | 0.207** | -0.096 | -0.177** | -0.214** | -0.322** | -0.361** | 0.233** | -0.154* | -0.006 | -0.053 | -0.016 | 0.067 | 0.085 | -0.137* |

GB refers to General Buyers; *FB* refers to Final Buyers; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $N = 267$

TABLE 7. Regression Analyses Predicting Transaction Duration in Study 10

| Variables | <i>Attachment × Caretaker intentions effect</i> | | | <i>Attachment × Critique avoidance effect</i> | | | <i>Attachment × Praise effect</i> | | |
|--|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Model 1-1 | Model 1-2 | Model 1-3 | Model 2-1 | Model 2-2 | Model 2-3 | Model 3-1 | Model 3-2 | Model 3-3 |
| <i>Intercept</i> | 1.53*** | 1.46*** | 1.59*** | 1.53*** | 1.50*** | 1.12*** | 1.53*** | 1.51*** | 0.67** |
| <i>Attachment</i> | 0.05 (0.09) | 0.05 (0.09) | 0.09 (0.12) | 0.13 (0.09) | 0.13 (0.08) | -0.09 (0.12) | 0.12 (0.08) | 0.13 (0.08) | -0.29* (0.14) |
| <i>Caretaker intention</i> | 0.26*** (0.08) | 0.21** (0.08) | 0.25** (0.09) | | | | | | |
| <i>Critique avoidance</i> | | | | 0.11 (0.08) | 0.1 (0.07) | 0.05 (0.08) | | | |
| <i>Praise</i> | | | | | | | 0.13† (0.07) | 0.13† (0.07) | -0.09 (0.09) |
| <i>Attachment × Caretaker intentions</i> | | 0.14* (0.06) | 0.15* (0.06) | | | 0.11*** (0.03) | | | 0.12*** (0.03) |
| <i>Attachment × Critique avoidance</i> | | | 0.03 (0.03) | | 0.11† (0.06) | 0.05 (0.06) | | | 0.03 (0.03) |
| <i>Attachment × Praise</i> | | | -0.04 (0.03) | | | -0.04 (0.03) | | 0.04 (0.06) | -0.09 (0.07) |
| <i>N</i> | 267 | 267 | 267 | 267 | 267 | 267 | 267 | 267 | 267 |
| <i>Adjusted R²</i> | 0.05 | 0.07 | 0.06 | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.06 |
| <i>F test of model</i> | 7.83 | 7.14 | 4.58 | 2.86 | 2.89 | 4.51 | 3.38 | 2.43 | 4.6 |

Notes. Unstandardized coefficients are reported, with standard errors in parentheses. All continuous variables are mean centered.
[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 8. Regression Analyses Predicting Objective Seller Discount in Study 10

| Variables | <i>Attachment × Final buyer praise effect</i> | | | | | | <i>Attachment × Final buyer caretaker intentions effect</i> | | | | | |
|--|---|--------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------|
| | Model 1-1 | | Model 1-2 | | Model 1-3 | | Model 2-1 | | Model 2-2 | | Model 2-3 | |
| <i>Intercept</i> | 16.79*** | | 16.21*** | | 18.13*** | | 16.79*** | | 16.54*** | | 18.74*** | |
| <i>Attachment</i> | -0.64 | (0.89) | -0.71 | (0.88) | 0.06 | (1.56) | -0.88 | (0.89) | -0.88 | (0.89) | 0.08 | (1.43) |
| <i>Final buyer praise</i> | -1.77* | (0.80) | -1.91* | (0.78) | -1.71* | (0.85) | | | | | | |
| <i>Final buyer caretaker intentions</i> | | | | | -0.20 | (0.33) | -1.11 | (0.90) | -1.22 | (0.90) | -0.91 | (0.97) |
| <i>Attachment × Final buyer praise</i> | | | 1.87** | (0.62) | 2.00** | (0.66) | | | | | -0.26 | (0.31) |
| <i>Attachment × Final buyer caretaker intentions</i> | | | | | | | | 1.10 | (0.70) | 1.31† | (0.74) | |
| <i>N</i> | 267 | | 267 | | 267 | | 267 | | 267 | | 267 | |
| <i>Adjusted R²</i> | 0.02 | | 0.05 | | 0.04 | | 0.004 | | 0.01 | | 0.01 | |
| <i>F test of model</i> | 3.27 | | 5.28 | | 4.04 | | 1.56 | | 1.87 | | 1.58 | |

Notes. Unstandardized coefficients are reported, with standard errors in parentheses. All continuous variables are mean centered.

†*p* < 0.10; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.

TABLE 9. Regression Analyses Predicting Subjective Seller Discount in Study 10

| Variables | <i>Attachment × Final buyer praise effect</i> | | | | | | <i>Attachment × Final buyer caretaker intentions effect</i> | | | | | |
|--|---|--------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---|--------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Model 1-1 | | Model 1-2 | | Model 1-3 | | Model 2-1 | | Model 2-2 | | Model 2-3 | |
| <i>Intercept</i> | 2.61*** | | 2.61*** | | 2.80*** | | 2.61*** | | 2.63*** | | 2.82*** | |
| <i>Attachment</i> | -0.03 | (0.04) | -0.03 | (0.04) | 0.05 | (0.07) | -0.04 | (0.04) | -0.04 | (0.04) | 0.04 | (0.06) |
| <i>Final buyer praise</i> | -0.10** | (0.04) | -0.10** | (0.04) | -0.08† | (0.04) | | | | | | |
| <i>Final buyer caretaker intentions</i> | | | | | | | -0.06 | (0.04) | -0.05 | (0.04) | -0.02 | (0.04) |
| <i>Attachment × Final buyer praise</i> | | | -0.02 | (0.03) | -0.01 | (0.03) | | | | | -0.02 | (0.01) |
| <i>Attachment × Final buyer caretaker intentions</i> | | | | | -0.02 | (0.03) | | | -0.09** | (0.03) | -0.07* | (0.03) |
| <i>N</i> | 267 | | 267 | | 267 | | 267 | | 267 | | 267 | |
| <i>Adjusted R²</i> | 0.03 | | 0.02 | | 0.03 | | 0.01 | | 0.03 | | 0.04 | |
| <i>F test of model</i> | 4.52 | | 3.20 | | 2.82 | | 1.77 | | 3.75 | | 3.49 | |

Notes. Unstandardized coefficients are reported, with standard errors in parentheses. All continuous variables are mean centered.

† $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

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