

Mediated Minds Conference, University of Cincinnati, Blue Ash April 19, 2019

Does This Make Me Look Arrogant? Examining People's Perceptions Of Humble-braggers On Social Media

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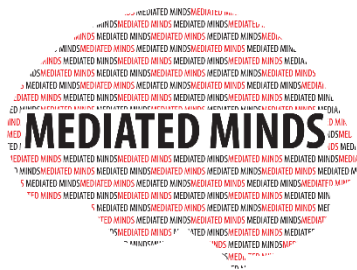
Abstract — *In this project, I examine whether a man who humblebrags online about a recent achievement or his attractiveness is seen as less arrogant than one who brags about these topics in a straightforward manner.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The present experimental study sought to examine how humblebrags are perceived by others. A convenient sample of participants were asked to rate the arrogance of a man (i.e., “John”) after reading a tweet in which he bragged about either a recent achievement or his attractiveness. The brags in each condition were systematically manipulated to reflect either a complaint-based humblebrag, humility-based humblebrag, or straightforward brag. Results revealed that John was perceived as more arrogant when he bragged about his attractiveness than when he bragged about a recent achievement, but only when the brag was framed as a straightforward or complaint-based humblebrag.

II. FINDINGS

Results of the present experimental study revealed that the extent to which people view a bragger as being arrogant depends on whether (a) the brag was framed as a straightforward brag, complaint-based humblebrag, or a humility-based humblebrag, and (b) the bragger was bragging about his attractiveness or a recent achievement. More specifically, participants in the current study thought that a man who bragged about his attractiveness on Twitter was more arrogant than one who bragged about a recent achievement, but only when the brag was framed as a straightforward or complaint-based humblebrag. Although the same trend was evident when the brag was



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framed as a humility-based brag, the difference did not reach standard levels of statistical significance.

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Sezer, O., Gino, F., & Norton, M. I. (2018). Humblebragging: A distinct and ineffective self-presentation strategy/ Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 114 (1), 52-74. <https://doi-org.proxy.libraries.uc.edu/10.1037/pspi0000108>

Does This Make Me Look Arrogant?

Examining People's Perceptions Of Braggers On Social Media

A Class Project by Doug Davenport
PSYC2002 – Research Methods and Statistics II

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Bragging

- Bragging (i.e., boasting about one's accomplishments, successes, or unique characteristics) is a self-presentational strategy that is focused on gaining social approval and admiration from others (Giacolone & Rosenfeld, 1986).
- Although bragging can be an effective means to convey competence and elicit respect or sympathy from others (Zivnuska et al., 2004), it can also negatively affect liking and elicit negative emotions from those listening (Godfrey et al., 1986).
 - People don't like individuals who brag, as such individuals are seen as conceited or arrogant.

Humblebragging

- Interestingly, to circumvent the negative consequences of bragging, people tend to mask their brags in such a way to appear humble (e.g., by masking the brag in humility).

I'm wearing a ponytail, rolled out of bed from a nap, at the bar w/ my guy and guys are still hitting on me. Like really??

↩ Reply 12 R



Humblebragging

- This unique form of self-presentation – called “humblebragging” – seemingly allows braggers to gain admiration from others while simultaneously mitigating people’s tendency to view them as arrogant (Sezer et al., 2018).



Humblebragging

- In the seminal research study on humblebragging, Sezer et al. (2018) found that humblebragging is a common social phenomenon that takes two forms.
 - Humility-based humblebrags
 - “I can’t understand why everybody complements me on my looks.”
 - Complaint-based humblebrags
 - “I am tired of being the thoughtful and kind person all the time.”
- Further, this research found that humblebragging is largely ineffective as a self-presentation strategy.
 - People who humblebragged were less liked, and perceived as less competent, than those who bragged in a straightforward manner.

The Current Study

- Although prior research has identified that humblebragging is ineffective as a means to bolster people's perceptions of competence, research has yet to examine...
 - a) whether humblebragging is also relatively ineffective at mitigating people's perceptions that the bragger is arrogant.
 - b) and whether this effect is moderated by the topic of the brag.
- Consequently, the current study was designed to examine whether people's perceptions concerning a bragger's arrogance depend on the (a) type of brag, and (b) topic of the brag.

Methods

- Sample
 - A total of 146 adults, (82% female, 92% White) who ranged in age from 18 to 55 years of age ($M_{\text{age}} = 26.47$, $SD = 11.01$) were recruited via snowball sampling on Facebook and Twitter to participate in the current study.
- Procedure
 - Participants read a tweet, ostensibly posted by a man (“John”), that was systematically manipulated to either reflect a complaint-based humblebrag, humility-based humblebrag, or straightforward brag about his attractiveness or a recent achievement.

Example Materials

Attractiveness (Male)

Straightforward Brag



John
@johnboy



Follow

Girls think I am hot. #hotguy

Humility-based Brag



John
@johnboy



Follow

I don't know why girls think I am hot. I am just an average guy. #confusedguy

Complaint-based Brag



John
@johnboy



Follow

Sometimes I hate being so hot. Girls are always checking me out. #hotguyproblems

Achievement (Male)

Straightforward Brag



John
@johnboy



Follow

I just landed a job at a great company! #employed

Humility-based Brag



John
@johnboy



Follow

I cannot believe I just managed to get a job at a great company. My interview was a disaster! #lucky

Complaint-based Brag



John
@johnboy



Follow

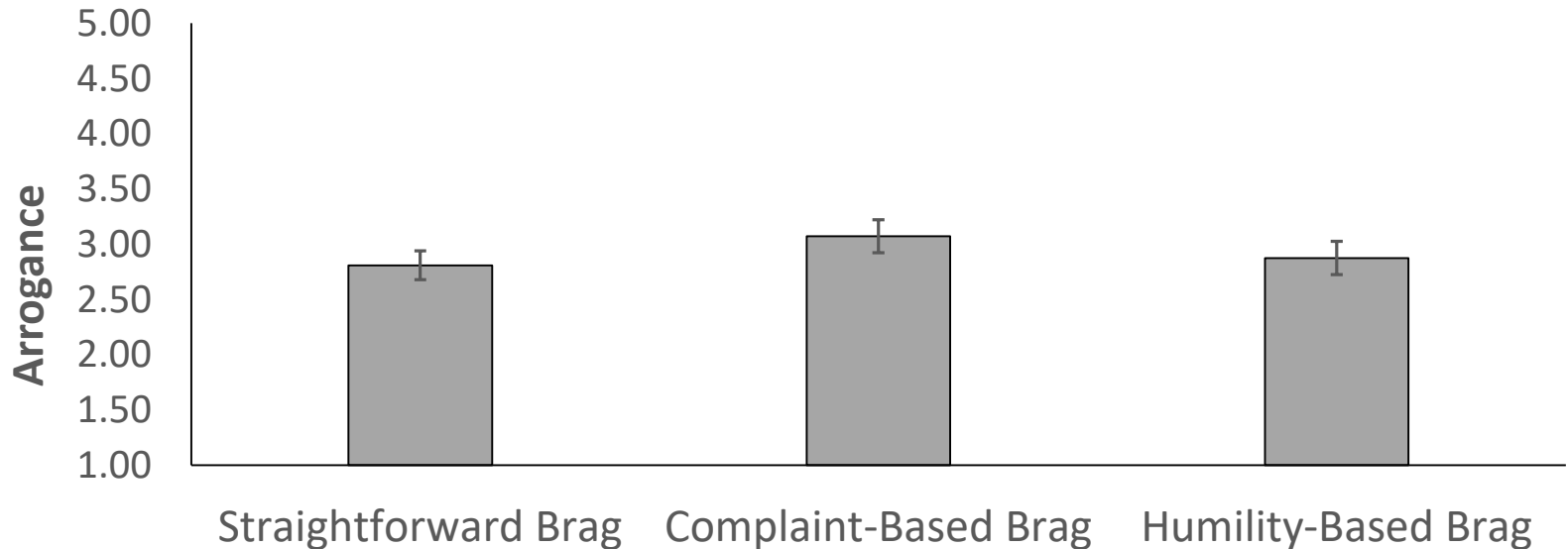
Crap! Now I am going to have to be a "professional." I just landed a job at a great company. #adultingsucks

Methods

- After viewing the tweet, participants were asked to complete a four-item adjective checklist assessing their perceptions that the bragger is arrogant using a 5-point scale ranging from 1(not at all) to 5 (extremely).
 - Four-items ($\alpha = .95$)
 - “Arrogant”
 - “Conceited”
 - “Cocky”
 - “Vain”

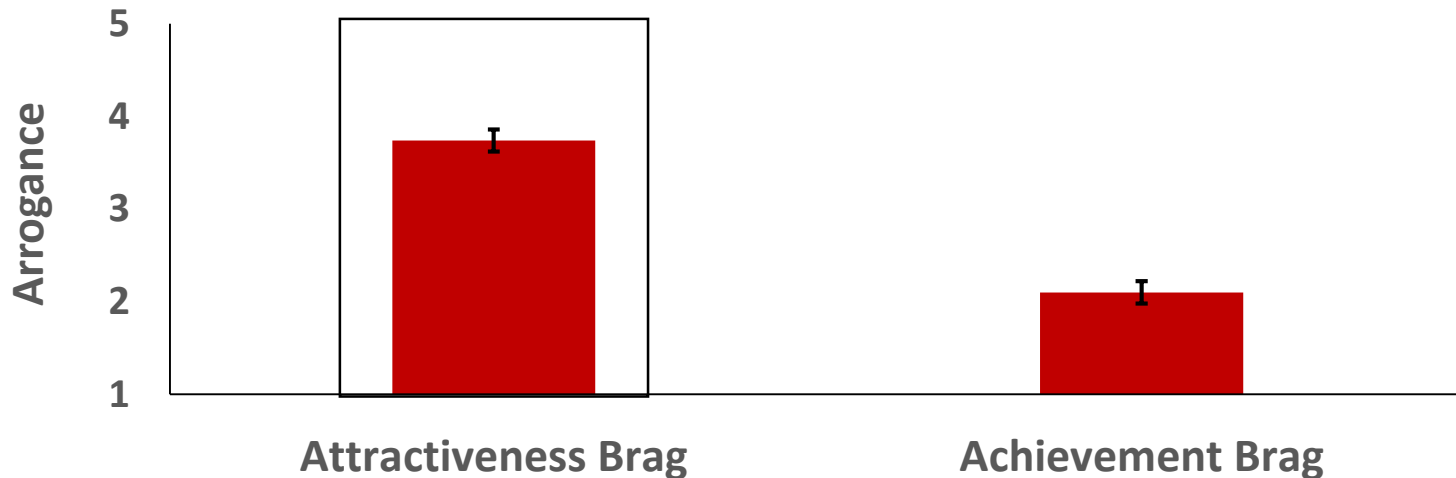
Results

- A 2(Topic of Brag) x 3(Type of Brag) Between - Subjects ANOVA conducted on participants' arrogance scores revealed that main effect of type of brag was not significant, $F(2, 140) = .94, p = .39$.



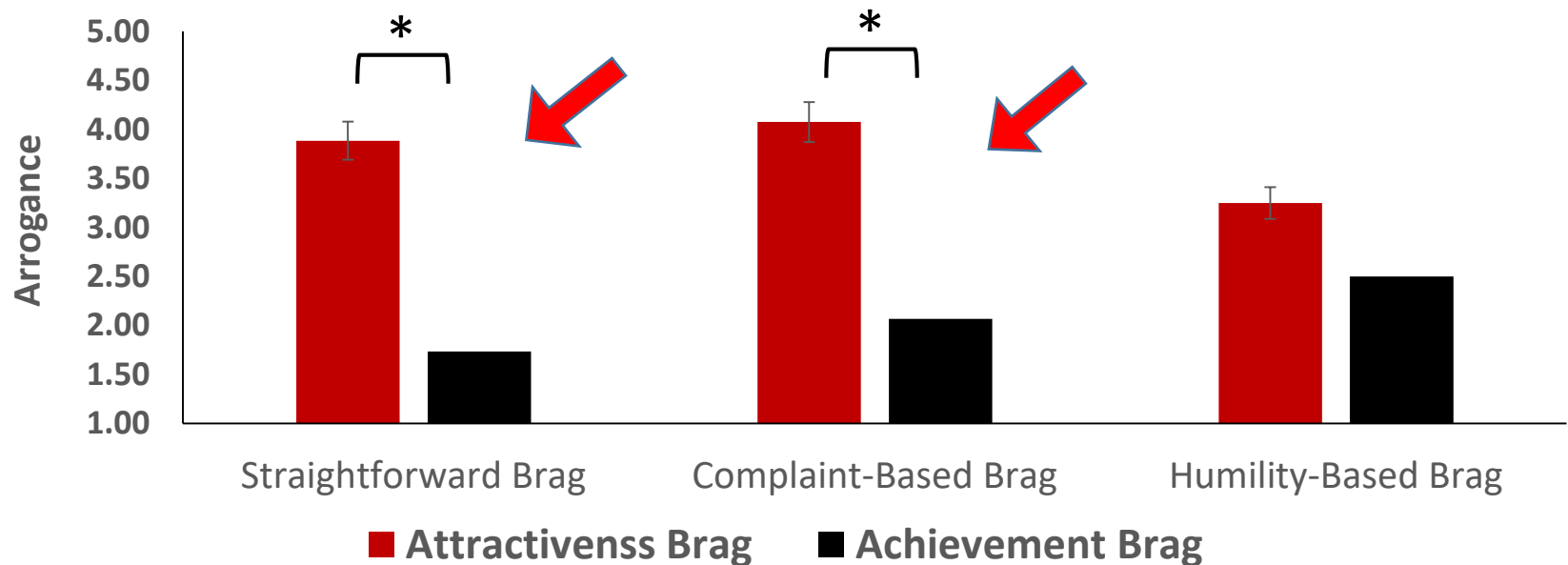
Results

- However, main effect of topic of brag was significant, $F(1, 140) = 99.20, p < .001, \eta^2 = .42$.
 - The bragger was perceived as *less* arrogant when he bragged about a recent achievement than when he bragged about his attractiveness.



Results

- This main effect, however, was qualified by a significant two-way interaction of Topic of Brag and Type of Brag, $F(2, 140) = 7.12, p = .001, \eta^2 = .09$.



Discussion

- Consistent with prior research (e.g., Sezer et al., 2018), results from the current study revealed that humblebragging is largely ineffective as a means to garner social acceptance.
 - Participants rated a man who posted a complaint-based and humility-based humblebrag on twitter as being just as arrogant as one who simply posted a straightforward brag about himself.



Discussion and Implications

- Extending prior research, the present study examined how perceptions of humblebragging may depend on the topic of the brag.
 - Participants viewed a bragger as being more arrogant if he bragged about his attractiveness than if he bragged about an achievement, and especially if he framed his brag as a straightforward brag or a complaint-based humblebrag.
- Overall, this research suggests that bragging, generally, and humblebragging, specifically, are complex social behaviors that warrant further research.

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