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Humblebragging as a Self-Presentation Strategy: Role of Gender of Bragger and Type of Brag

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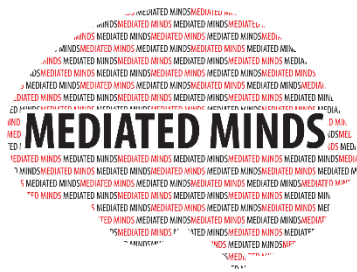
Abstract — *In this project, I examined whether people's admiration and liking of a bragger is impacted by how the brag is framed (i.e., as a humblebrag or a straightforward brag) and whether the bragger is depicted as being male or female.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The present experimental study examined the extent to which people's admiration and liking of a male or female bragger on social media is impacted by how the brag is framed (i.e., as a straightforward brag, a complaint-based humblebrag or a humility-based humblebrag). As predicted, participants admired and liked a male bragger more than a female bragger when the brag was framed as a straightforward brag. Unexpectedly, however, results revealed that a female bragger was admired, but not liked, more than a male bragger when the brag was framed as a complaint-based humblebrag. No differences were found when the brag was framed as humility-based humblebrag.

II. FINDINGS

Results revealed that humblebragging was generally ineffective as a self-presentational strategy. Although complaint-based and humility-based humblebrags were just as effective as a straightforward brag at fostering liking, participants actually admired the bragger more when the brag was framed as a straightforward brag than when it was framed as a humblebrag. Further, the effectiveness of bragging at fostering participants' liking and admiration of the bragger depended on whether the bragger was depicted as male or female. For instance, male braggers were liked and admired more than a female bragger when the brag was framed as a straightforward



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brag. In contrast, participants admired a female bragger more than a male bragger when the brag was framed as a complaint-based humblebrag. No differences emerged when the brag was framed as a humility-based humblebrag.

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Humblebragging as a Self-Presentation Strategy: Examining the Moderating Role of Gender of Bragger

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Bragging

- Bragging is an interesting phenomenon where people shamelessly promote or otherwise advertise their positive qualities or achievements in an attempt to gain social approval and admiration (Giacolone & Rosenfeld, 1986).



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 r still hitting on me. Like really??

10:43 PM May 1st via UberSocial

↩ Reply 13 R

- This unique form of self-presentation – called “humblebragging” – 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 compliments me on my looks.”
 - Complaint-based humblebrags
 - “I am tired of being the thoughtful and kind person all the time.”

The Current Study

- Research has yet to examine whether the effectiveness of humblebragging to elicit liking and admiration may be impacted by characteristics of the bragger (e.g., the gender of the bragger).
- Considering males tend to be perceived as more socially dominant than females (Pratto et al. 1994), and therefore more likely to brag...
 - It seems feasible that people would like and admire a male more when he brags than when a female brags – especially in a straightforward manner.

Methods

- Sample
 - A total of 56 adults, (71% female, 93% White) who ranged in age from 18 to 55 years of age ($M_{\text{age}} = 29.84$, $SD = 13.61$) were recruited via snowball sampling on Facebook and Twitter to participate in the current study.
- Procedure
 - Participants read two tweets, one posted by a male and the other posted by a female, that were systematically manipulated to either reflect a complaint-based humblebrag, humility-based humblebrag, or straightforward brag about a recent achievement.

Achievement Brags

Female Bragger

Achievement (Female)

Straightforward Brag



I got straight A's last semester. #smart

Humility-based Brag



I cannot believe I got straight A's last semester. I am not even that smart. #notworthy

Complaint-based Brag



I cannot believe I got straight A's last semester. I am not even that smart. #notworthy

Male Bragger

Achievement (Male)

Straightforward Brag



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

Humility-based Brag



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

Complaint-based Brag



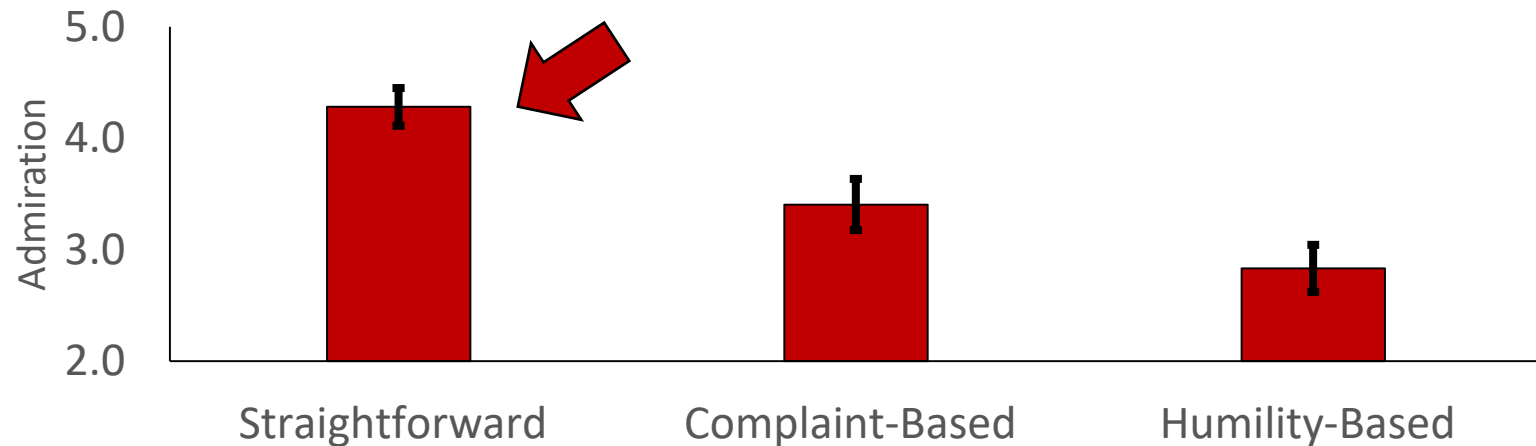
Crap! Now I am going to have to be a "professional." I just landed a job at a great company. #adulgingsucks

Methods

- After viewing each brag, participants were asked to rate how much they disagree or agree with six statements on a 7-point Likert scale.
 - Three statements assessed admiration ($\alpha = .85$)
 - “I admire this person.”
 - “I look up to this person.”
 - “I respect this person”
 - Three statements assessed liking ($\alpha = .89$)
 - “I like this person.”
 - “I would be friends with this person.”
 - “I would hang out with this person.”

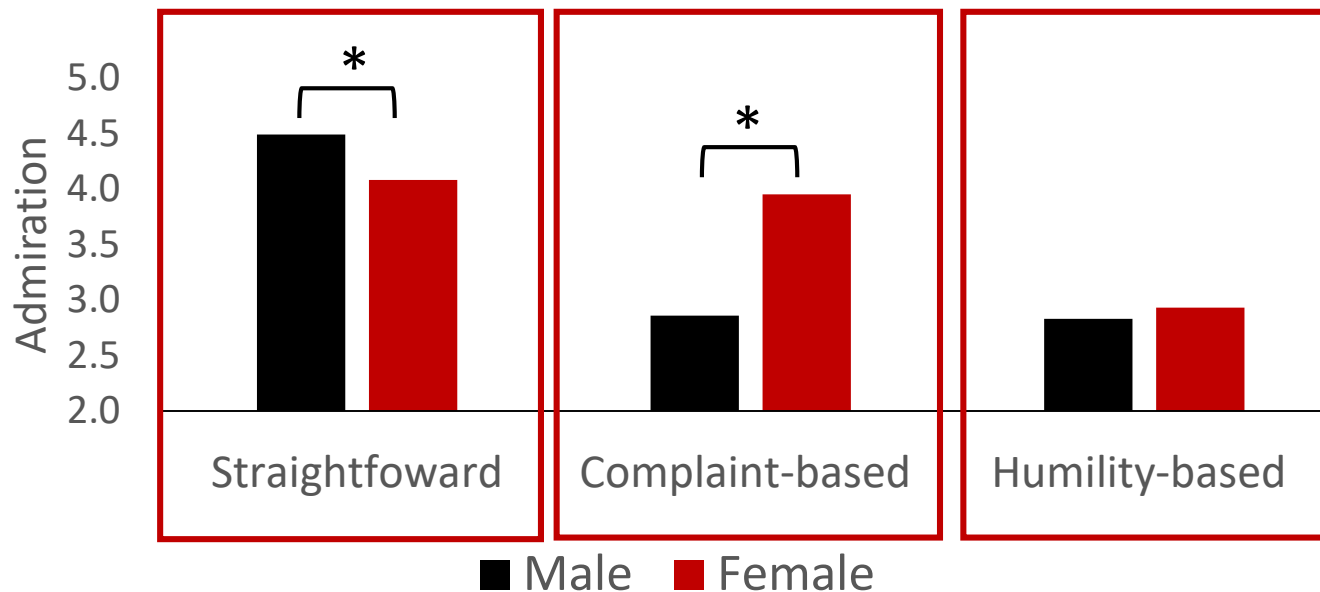
Results

- A 2(Gender of Bragger) x 3(Type of Brag) ANOVA on participants' admiration scores revealed that participants admired a bragger more when the brag was framed as a straightforward brag than when it was framed as complaint-based or humility-based humblebrag, $F(2, 53) = 14.42, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$.



Results

- This main effect, however, was qualified by a significant two-way interaction of Gender of Bragger and Type of Brag, $F(2, 53) = 8.05, p = .001, \eta^2 = .23$.



Results

- A 2(Gender of Bragger) x 3(Type of Brag) ANOVA was then conducted on participants' liking scores.
- Results revealed that the two-way interaction was marginally significant, $F(2, 53) = 2.65, p = .07, \eta^2 = .09$.



Discussion

- Consistent with prior research, results of the present study revealed that humblebragging was generally ineffective as a self-presentational strategy.
 - Participants admired a person more when he or she bragged in a straightforward manner than when he or she humblebragged.
 - Furthermore, a person who humblebragged wasn't liked more (or less) than a person who bragged in a straightforward manner.



Discussion

- Extending prior research, the current study examined the moderating role of gender when it comes to humblebragging.
- As predicted, participants admired and liked a male bragger more than a female bragger when the brag was framed as a straightforward brag.
- Unexpectedly, however, results revealed that a female bragger was admired, but not liked, more than a male bragger when the brag was framed as a complaint.
- No differences were found when the brag was framed as a humility-based brag.

Implications and Future Directions

- Although the current study was limited in scope, it highlights the importance of examining how characteristics of the bragger may influence the effectiveness of various self-presentational strategies (e.g., bragging).
- Further, considering that humblebragging isn't an effective strategy to elicit admiration or offset negative evaluation, future research should continue to examine why people humblebrag to begin with.

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