

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

 Sarah
@sarah123 

I got straight A's last semester. #smart

Humility-based Brag

 Sarah
@sarah123 

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

Complaint-based Brag

 Sarah
@sarah123 

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

Male Bragger


Achievement (Male)

Straightforward Brag

 John
@john123 


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

Humility-based Brag

 John
@john123 

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

Complaint-based Brag

 John
@john123 

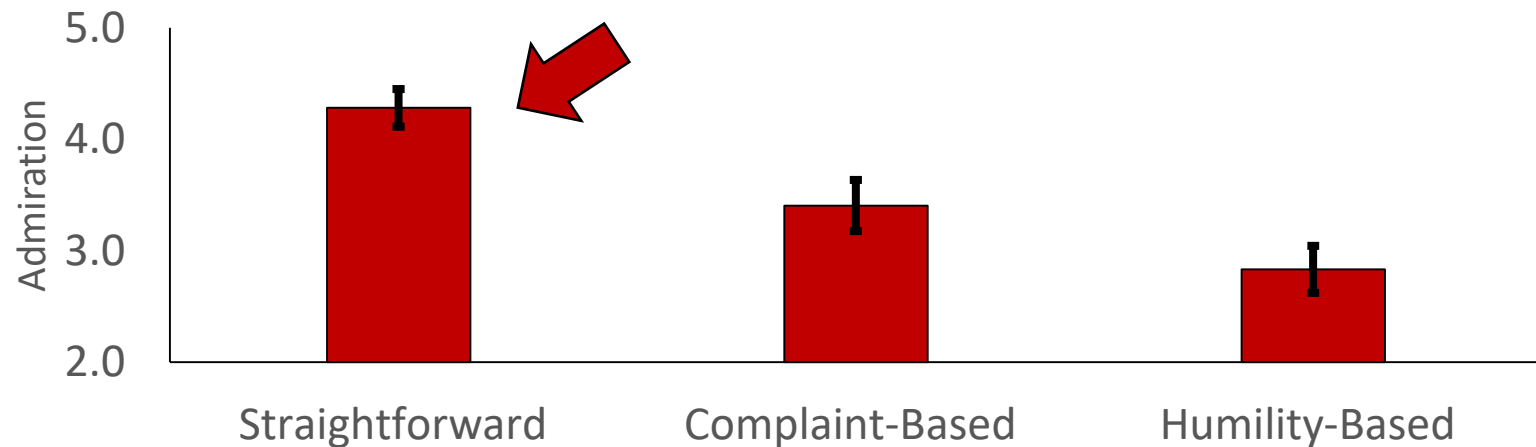
Crap! Now I am going to have to be a "professional." I just landed a job at a great company. #adultingsucks

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.”

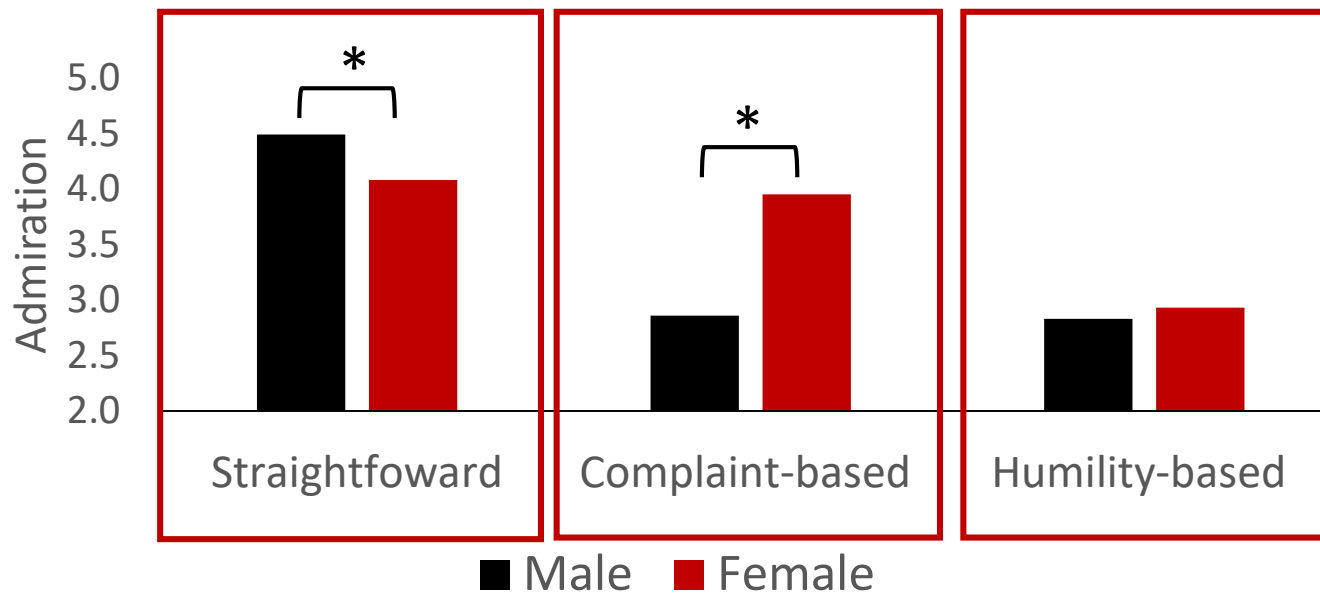
Results

- 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.

References

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