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Can an Angry Woman Get Ahead?

Status Conferral, Gender, and Expression of Emotion in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT—T, i a i d i a
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During an appearance on a national news program, the chairman of the Republican National Committee asserted that Senator

result, negative responses to women who express anger could occur readily in professional contexts.

Moreover, the expectation that a woman will not express anger publicly should affect attributions for the cause of her anger. Kelley's (1967, 1973) attribution model stipulates that when a person's behavior is characterized by *atypicality* (i.e., is different from that of peers), social perceivers are likely to attribute the behavior to internal characteristics (e.g., perceive anger as stemming from disposition, as opposed to features of the situation). According to this model, because anger and pride are the only emotions that people believe men express more than women (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000), a woman's anger should be seen as internally caused (e.g., "she is an angry person," "she is out of control") rather than externally instigated (e.g., "the situation was frustrating"). Thus, people should view a man's anger as a response to objective, external circumstances, but a woman's anger as a product of her personality. As a result, a professional woman's anger may imply that she is not competent

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents mean scores for all four targets for all of the dependent measures. We hypothesized that there would be an interaction between emotion and the target's gender. Specifically, we expected to replicate Tiedens's (2001) finding that an angry man receives higher status, a higher salary, and higher competence ratings than a sad man. We also expected that participants would give the angry woman lower status and lower salary than the angry man, would perceive her as less competent than the angry man, and would be more likely to attribute her anger than his to internal, dispositional causes.

Status

A 2 (target's gender: male vs. female) \times 2 (emotion: anger vs. sadness) analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted on the status-conferral scores revealed a significant interaction, $F(1, 64) = 16.38$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .996$. As in Tiedens's (2001) study, participants conferred higher status on the angry male target than on the sad male target, $M(32) = 3.59$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .986$. Participants also conferred significantly higher status on the angry male than on the angry female, $M(31) = 3.85$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .986$.¹ Furthermore, participants conferred significantly higher status on the sad female than on the angry female, $M(32) = 2.07$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .882$.

Salary

The salary measure also showed a significant interaction between gender of the target and emotion expression, $F(1, 55) = 5.46$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .921$. Participants were willing to pay the angry male more than the sad male, $M(26) = 1.77$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .840$, and significantly more than the angry female, $M(25) = 3.05$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .966$. Participants were willing to pay the angry female marginally less than the sad female, $M(29) = 1.51$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .778$.

Competence

Perceptions of competence likewise showed a significant interaction between the target's gender and emotion expression, $F(1, 65) = 7.56$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .956$. Participants viewed the angry male

as significantly more competent than the sad male, $M(32) = 3.91$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .956$.

control individuals. To the extent that anger is attributed to the individual's personality rather than external circumstances, expressing that anger is likely to be perceived as a self-regulation failure. Therefore, we hypothesized that participants would view an angry woman as being out of control, and that this internal attribution would help explain why angry women are accorded low status.

Method

Participants (70 males, 110 females; mean age = 42.46 years) were randomly assigned to view one of eight videos. The study

male trainees, regardless of their expression of emotion, $F(1, 75) = 7.61$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .959$.

The competence scores showed a two-way interaction between gender of the target and emotion expression, $F(1, 172) = 7.52$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .959$, as well as a three-way interaction, $F(1, 172) = 4.82$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .910$. The two-way interaction mirrored the pattern found for status conferral and salary, and the three-way interaction indicated a particularly negative response to the high-rank angry female target. A planned contrast indicated that participants rated the angry female CEO as significantly less competent than all the other targets, $F(172) = 3.01$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .953$.

For the internal-attribution ratings, a three-way ANOVA revealed the theoretically expected two-way interaction between gender of the target and emotion expression, $F(1, 172) = 5.78$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .938$. A planned contrast indicated that participants viewed the angry female targets as significantly more out of control than the angry male targets and the unemotional male and unemotional female targets, $F(174) = 4.80$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .986$.

A series of regression analyses tested the prediction that perceptions of angry women as out of control would explain their failure to attain high status. For female targets, expression of anger was significantly related to the internal attribution of being out of control, $\beta(89) = .39$, $p < .01$, and status conferral, $\beta(89) = .23$, $p < .05$. Furthermore, internal attribution was related to status conferral, $\beta(89) = .46$, $p < .001$. When we used internal attribution and emotion expression as independent variables to predict status conferral, only the coefficient for internal-attribution ratings remained significant, $\beta(89) = .44$, $p < .001$. The coefficient for emotion expression fell from .23 to .06 and was no longer significant, Sobel $z = 2.87$, $p < .01$. Thus, the internal attribution that an angry woman was out of control fully mediated the relationship between her expression of anger and the status she was accorded (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

STUDY 3

Studies 1 and 2 found that angry women are accorded lower status than angry men, and Study 2 indicated that this is true regardless of the woman's actual status (i.e., whether she is a CEO or an assistant trainee). Moreover, attributions appear to play a role in this phenomenon: People may confer low status on an angry woman because they see her behavior as arising from something deep and inherent—that is, from her being an angry and out-of-control person. If inherent, internal attributions underlie this phenomenon, then an intervention designed to direct attributions away from internal factors and toward external factors might be effective at mitigating the bias. Lending support to this hypothesis, Heilman and Okimoto (2007) demonstrated

that preventing negative attributions for violations of gender-based norms reduces penalties for counterstereotypical behavior. Therefore, in Study 3, we tested the hypothesis that if an angry female professional provides an objective, external reason for being angry, she should evoke less negative reactions. Experimentally manipulating this proposed mechanism (i.e., attributions)—rather than treating it as a continuous variable—would further establish its validity as a mediator of the bias against angry women (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005).

The potential effectiveness of such an intervention is also supported by Rudman and Fairchild's (2004) model of backlash effects. They proposed that violations of prescriptive gender stereotypes are most likely to provoke negative reactions when a potential rationalization for derogating the stereotype violator is available. To the extent that an angry female professional can provide an objective, external reason for being angry, she should evoke less negative reactions.

Method

Participants (51 males and 82 females; mean age = 38.70 years) watched one of six videos. The study utilized a 2 (target's gender: male vs. female) \times 3 (emotion: unexplained anger vs. explained anger vs. no emotion) between-subjects design. There was no external-attribution condition for the no-emotion condition because it was not plausible to offer an external attribution for expressing emotion.

Measures

Participants completed measures of status conferral, salary allocation, and competence.

Video Stimuli

The videotapes from Study 2 were used, but with two modifications. The information about the target's occupational status was removed, and in the explained-anger condition, the target made an external attribution for his or her anger—that a coworker lied to the target by telling him or her that he had directions to the client's office. This lie caused the target and coworker to lose the account.

Results and Discussion

Table 3 presents the mean ratings for the targets for all of the dependent measures.

Status Conferral

For status conferral, a 2 (target's gender: male vs. female) \times 3 (emotion: anger without external attribution vs. anger with external attribution vs. no emotion) ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the target's gender and emotion expression, $F(2, 34) = 9.72$, $\eta^2_{rep} = .999$. Examining each gender separately, we found that the angry male without an external attribution

competent (Eagly & Mladinic, 1993; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). The explanation for why self-promoting women are seen as competent, but angry women are seen as relatively incompetent, may be that women who self-promote are explicitly asserting their competence, whereas angry women are not—they are simply emoting.

Although women's anger appears to be sanctioned in a professional context, it may not be sanctioned in a family context (Kring, 2000; Tavris, 1982). Also, it is not clear whether this bias against angry women applies in professional contexts other than job interviews and early impression formation. It is possible that

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