

Personality and Social  
Psychology Bulletin  
36(7) 923–936  
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DOI: 10.1177/0146167210371949  
<http://pspb.sagepub.com>



Power and power seeking, in particular, are central to the constructs of agency and masculinity (Rudman, Greenwald, & McGhee, 2001; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Thus, these gender stereotypes make women appear less suited to powerful roles, as they are assumed to lack the agency required for leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Indeed, women are often characterized as soft-spoken and yielding, whereas men are seen as strong willed and having leadership skills (Bem, 1981; Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Political psychologists have also noted the incongruence between female gender stereotypes and positions of political power (Huddy & Capelos, 2002). Moreover, research has shown that gender stereotypes can affect voting preferences for male and female candidates by leading voters to assume that women lack effectiveness in male sex-typed political issues such as military and economic policy, and men lack effectiveness in issues demanding compassion such as policies relevant to children and families (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Sanbonmatsu, 2002). Gender stereotypes can also create assumptions about men's and women's ideological stance on various political issues, which may also affect male versus female candidate voting preferences (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; J. W. Koch, 2000).

Notably, however, these cultural stereotypes not only describe how people expect men and women to behave, but they also contain a prescriptive component explicating how men and women "ought" to behave (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2001, 2008; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Women are not only expected to be communal, but they are also expected to be communal as well. Such prescriptive expectations are pervasive, typically endorsed by both men and women, and serve to reinforce cultural stereotypes and existing hierarchical relations (see Fiske & Stevens, 1993; C. Hoffman & Hurst, 1990; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Ridgeway, 2007; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004).

As a result of these prescriptive gender norms, women are often interpersonally penalized for their violation of stereotypical expectations, discussed in the literature as "backlash effects" (Rudman, 1998) referring to the negative characterizations ascribed to women exhibiting agentic behavior. Interacting with counterstereotypical women elicits discomfort (Lips, 1991) and negative affective reactions (Richeson & Ambady, 2001), and may lead to the assignment of negative interpersonal characterizations (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 1999). Indeed, counterstereotypical women are often depicted as "bitchy," "selfish," "ice-queens," and "battle-axes" (Heilman et al., 2004; Kanter, 1977).

Such negative characterizations, however, can also affect subsequent outcomes (e.g., Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Heilman, 1995, 2001; Nieva & Gutek, 1980; Tosi & Einbinder, 1985). For example, a recent study by Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) showed that both male and female participants assigned less status and lower salaries to women who expressed anger

compared to their angry male counterparts. Similar findings have been documented in reaction to observations of other types of agentic behaviors, such as self-promotion (Rudman, 1998), competitiveness (Rudman & Glick, 1999), task-oriented speaking styles (Carli, LaFleur, & Loeber, 1995), authoritative leadership style (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992), administering discipline (Atwater, Carey, & Waldman, 2001; Brett, Atwater, & Waldman, 2005) or criticism (Sinclair & Kunda, 2000), and initiation of salary negotiations (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007). Negative reactions to prescriptive violations, however, are not necessarily dependent on the behavior of the actor but can also be simply inferred from the context. For example, Heilman et al. (2004) showed that, for women, merely being successful in male sex-typed occupations led to dislike and negative interpersonal characterizations (see also Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Heilman and Okimoto (2007) demonstrated that these penalties for women's achievement in male domains are specifically due to the communal deficit is by success. Once exM information was provided that the successful woman was communal, the backlash against her was mitigated.

The existing empirical evidence shows that



vote for?" Respondents then indicated their vote for "Ann" (female candidate) or for "John" (male candidate).<sup>2</sup>

We measured participants' perceptions of each target politician's power-seeking intentions to assess the extent to which perceived power seeking affected voting choices and whether this was true for both male and female target politicians. After reading the webpage information of each senator, participants were asked, "Did the senator exhibit a clear desire for power and status?" and responded by providing a 7-point scale rating (1 = "Not at all", 7 = "Very much"). Ratings of male and female targets were uncorrelated,  $r = .08$ .

We included a measure of political orientation as a control variable in all analyses (see Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009). Political orientation was assessed by participants rating themselves, politically, on a 7-point scale (1 = "Very liberal", 4 = "Moderate", 7 = "Very conservative"). The mean reported political orientation was normally distributed and very slightly left of center ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ).

For assessments of voting choice, there was no clear preference for male (47.5%) versus female (52.5%) politicians,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.20$ ,



is everything . . . it's key to gaining influence in politics.

. An independent pilot study was conducted to verify that the manipulation effectively varied power-seeking aspirations, independent of perceptions of actual power. Seventy participants (85% female; mean age = 34.5) evaluated the website stimuli varying power seeking (male target held constant). Assessments of . . . included the average of two items ( .85) rating the target as "power seeking" on a 7-point bipolar adjective scale, and explicitly asking, "Did the senator exhibit a clear desire for power and status?" (1 . . . , 7 . . . ). Analyses indicated that participants in the power-seeking condition ( = 5.75, *s* = 1.19) rated the target senator as having significantly higher power-seeking aspirations than did participants in the non-power-seeking condition ( = 4.38, *s* = 1.29), *t*(68) = 4.62, *p* = .001. Assessments of . . . included the average of three items ( .88) rating the senator as "powerful-not powerful" and "influential-not influential" on 7-point bipolar adjective scales, and explicitly asking them, "Would you say this person is powerful?" (1 . . . , 7 . . . ). Analyses indicated no differences between the power-seeking ( = 4.92, *s* = 1.18) and non-power-seeking conditions ( = 4.76, *s* = 0.78), *t*(68) = 0.69, *p* = .50. Results indicated that the manipulation successfully varied power-seeking aspirations without altering perceptions of actual power or influence.

. The primary dependent measure of voting preference was assessed by simply asking participants, "How much would you want this person to be your politician?" Preferences were rated on a 7-point scale (1 . . . , 7 . . . ).

A . The mediating variable of perceived agency was assessed by the composite average ( = .83) of three 7-point bipolar adjective ratings (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). Participants rated the extent to which they thought the senator was unassertive-assertive, weak-strong, and not tough-tough.

. The mediating variable of perceived communality was assessed by the composite average ( = .90) of two 7-point bipolar adjective ratings (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007): unsupportive-supportive and uncaring-caring.

. Perceived competence was assessed by the composite average ( = .91) of three 7-point bipolar adjective ratings (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007): incompetent-competent, ineffective-effective, and unproductive-productive.

. Participants' affective reactions toward the target senator were examined by assessing the extent to which they currently felt specific emotions toward the senator on a 7-point scale (1 . . . , 7 . . . ). Drawing from research on moral emotions (Izard, 1977; Rozin,

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Dependent Measures

			1	2	3	4	5
1. Political orientation	3.75	1.56	—				
2. Agency	5.13	1.08	.11	—			
3. Communality	4.85	1.20	.11	.49**	—		
4. Competence	5.22	1.15	.13*	.74**	.75**	—	
5. Moral outrage	1.45	0.84	.09	.18*	.43**	.39**	—
6. Voting preference	4.50	1.40	.10	.40**	.52**	.55**	.36**

\* *p* < .05. \*\* *p* < .01.

Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999), we included seven items assessing the three primary "other-directed" moral outrage emotions of contempt (+ disdain), anger (+ irritation and disapproval), and disgust (+ revulsion). All seven items were averaged to reflect a single factor of moral outrage ( = .93).<sup>5</sup>

. We again included the measure of political orientation used in Study 1 (1 . . . , 4 . . . , 7 . . . ) as a control variable in all analyses. The mean reported political orientation was again normally distributed and only slightly left of center ( = 3.75, *s* = 1.56). Correlations between all measures can be found in Table 1.

Cell means and standard deviations for all dependent measures can be found in Table 2. We employed regression techniques to allow for tests of mediation. Slope analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) were conducted when appropriate to further interpret interaction patterns. We also used stepwise regression (Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998) and Sobel (1982) tests to examine indirect effects when appropriate. Specifically, we examined the indirect effects of the manipulations on competence, moral outrage, and voter preferences through perceptions of agency and communality (testing Hypothesis 3). We also tested for the indirect effects of communality and agency on voting preferences through perceptions of competence and moral outrage (testing Hypothesis 4). Only significant effects are discussed in the text, but complete regression results are presented in Table 3.

. Including participant gender in a MANOVA yielded main effects on all measured variables, *F*(5, 217) = 3.48, *p* = .005. Women were more likely than men to give favorable (i.e., high) ratings of voting preference, agency, communality, and competence, as well as generally lower ratings of moral outrage. Importantly, however, participant gender . . . with either manipulation; the effects of target gender or power seeking were the same regardless of participant gender, and including participant gender in the analysis did not change the pattern of the results.









women, tactics such as social accounting (Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981) or establishing credentials as a good person (i.e., a “moral bank account” that one can draw on; see Monin & Miller, 2001).

Notably, perceived job competence was an important predictor of voting preferences. Consistent with past research (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a), both communality and agency played a role in perceived competence. Interestingly, however, the power-seeking female target also appeared to be disadvantaged in her competence ratings. The power-seeking female was seen as less communal and thus less competent than her non-power-seeking counterpart and was not seen as any more agentic. In contrast, the power-seeking male did not suffer from a perceived communal deficit and in fact was seen as more agentic than the non-power-seeking male. Therefore, although competence was clearly an important predictor of voting, the competence evaluations were biased against female power-seeking politicians and in favor of male power-seeking politicians. Thus, power-seeking women were disadvantaged on two fronts: (a) they were not given the agentic credit afforded to males exhibiting power-seeking behavior and (b) they were assumed to lack communality, affecting voting preferences through both competence perceptions and affective backlash.

## General Discussion

Overall, the results of Study 2 complement Study 1. Whereas Study 1 showed that power-seeking may have biasing effects against female but not male politicians, Study 2 showed that power-seeking intent may also bias voting preferences. Moreover, Study 2 provides causal evidence of backlash toward power-seeking women, an improvement over the correlational nature of Study 1, while also unpacking power seeking elicits backlash through detailed mediational analyses. Specifically, unlike male politicians, we find evidence that female politicians are expected to live up to a prescribed level of communality and that failure to meet those communal standards elicits backlash. These findings suggest that the desire for personal power is another perceived trait that may elicit a perceived lack of communality and induce backlash against women.

It is worth noting that despite evidence of evaluative bias, female politicians were generally not seen as any less favorable than male politicians. This general lack of a voting bias may have occurred for a number of reasons. For example, respondents in the current sample may indeed be egalitarian and no more inclined to vote for a male candidate than a female candidate; although we used nonstudent samples, educated Caucasian women were still overrepresented, which may have influenced these baseline voting preferences (see Sears & Huddy, 1993). Moreover, the specific role on which we surveyed (i.e., state senator) may not be as male sex-typed as high-level managerial roles (Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002; Schein, 2001), the context in

which the majority of the research on counterstereotypical backlash has been done. Thus, there may not be a “lack of fit” (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983) between the roles of state senator and that of women. Rather, there is a lack of fit between female gender roles and the power-hungry aspirations that may be held by some political leaders. However, this does not necessarily mean that politics is absent of gendered roles; as with business, positions in the upper echelons of federal politics or those requiring particularly high levels of agency may show some degree of bias in absence of power-seeking perceptions (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a, 1993b). Regardless of whether these baseline gender preferences accurately reflect voting behavior, the present research achieved its theoretical goal of documenting the biasing effects of power-seeking intentions (i.e., evidence of an interaction) and elucidating the underlying theoretical explanation underpinning that bias.

More to the point, these two studies show evidence of differential standards for male and female politicians; voting preferences for the female target were influenced by perceived power-seeking intentions, whereas voting preferences for the male target were not. This is consistent with the fact that people tend to use within-category reference points when judging an individual on stereotype-relevant dimensions (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997; Biernat & Manis, 1994). For example, when asked to judge whether a woman is tall, individuals will form their opinion based on whether the woman is tall relative to other women, not other men. Thus, people may be quicker to judge a woman as power seeking, as opposed to a man because on average people believe that women are less likely to want power than men. Prescriptive beliefs that women should not desire power may only enhance this “shifting standards” effect.

It may also be worth noting that although female participants provided generally more favorable ratings, in both studies male and female participants did not differ in their reactions to power seeking or target gender; men and women

In other words, backlash may occur more often in political roles requiring more of a commanding, decisive, and authoritative style (e.g., president of the United States, speaker of the House of Representatives), and further research is necessary to identify whether backlash is indeed an incessant barrier to women in high-level politics. Moreover, it is necessary to further dissect the concept of power. In this investigation, we focused on power as counter to stereotypical prescriptions for women and not for men, but it is still unclear whether (and when) simply power implies a lack of communality. We speculate that being powerful is indeed strongly associated with agency and as such can lead to a perceived violation of prescriptive communal norms. However, we believe that a more complete understanding of power is necessary to fully uncover how having power might elicit backlash against women. For example, we would expect the distinction between having “power to” (i.e., communal, pro-social power) versus having “power over” (agentic, egoistic power) to play a key role in determining the effects of perceived male versus female power (Yoder & Kahn, 1992), as the former may imply the exertion of influence for the sake of communal goals.

Notwithstanding the need for future research, this work highlights an understudied source of gender bias in political contexts while expanding our knowledge of the processes through which counterstereotypical characteristics can negatively bias evaluations of women. Moreover, this work underscores the importance of the role of power in the evaluation of women.



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