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When a Politician Disappoints: The Role of Gender Stereotypical Expectations in Post-Scandal Judgment

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how evaluations of male and female politicians are worsened by corruption scandals that disappoint expectations of honesty. Participants evaluated a fictitious politician before and after watching a video about a corruption scandal involving that politician. The manipulated variables were the politician's sex and whether they shared participants' political affiliations. Results showed that a female politician affiliated with the participants' preferred party was the most damaged by the scandal because she had the highest expectations of honesty placed upon her.

KEYWORDS

Political scandals; gender stereotypes; (dis)honesty expectations; political affiliation; attitudes

Introduction

As politics remains a predominantly masculine domain (e.g., Cavazza and Pacilli 2021), it should not be surprising that scandals involve male politicians more often than female ones. Additionally, women are actually less corrupt, more trustworthy, and have higher standards of ethical behavior in politics than men (e.g., Kerstin and Rau 2017; Swamy et al. 2001). This evidence led some authors to suggest that increasing women's participation in government and public affairs could mitigate corruption (Treisman 2007). Even though the assertion that women are always less corrupt than men has been challenged (Goetz 2007; Sung 2003; Waylen and Southern 2021), this belief is quite widespread among citizens, and it is rooted in gender stereotypes (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014). Indeed, recent studies confirmed that gender stereotypes play a key role in determining differences in citizens' judgment when a political scandal involves a man or a woman (Cucchi and Cavazza 2021; Cucchi et al. 2021). However, whether this difference is due to a violation of the expectation of (dis)honesty stemming from politicians' gender and political affiliations has yet to be examined. Answering this question is the present study's aim.

Gender stereotypes in politics

The literature on gender stereotypes highlights that men and women are considered differently with regard to their personality traits: women are perceived as more community-centered and care-oriented – that is, more compassionate, ethical, and trustworthy than men. Meanwhile, men are viewed as being more agentic and self-centered; they are considered more assertive, self-confident, and stronger than women (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Dolan 2010; Eagly and Karau 2002; Sapiro 1981). This means that female politicians' probity “is grounded in essentialist notions of women's higher moral nature and an assumed propensity to bring this to bear on public life, and particularly on the conduct of politics” (Goetz 2007, 87). In addition, female politicians can strengthen this gender

stereotypical expectation during campaigns stressing women's moral integrity (Reyes-Housholder 2020). Gender stereotypes generate expectations about what characteristics and behavior a given individual should present just because of their sex (Ellemers 2018) and provide a standard of judgment about that individual (Biernat and Manis 1994; Biernat, Manis, and Nelson 1991).

There is much evidence that in the political domain gender stereotypes and their subsequent expectations can be employed as cognitive shortcuts, directing citizens' judgments about politicians as a function of how well the politician aligns with what is expected from them (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Kahn 1994; King and Matland 2003; Koch 1999; Leeper 1991; Matland 1994; Rosenwasser and Seale 1988; Sapiro 1981). For example, Cucchi et al. (2021) showed that a female politician defending herself after a scandal benefited more from her defense when using submissive (in line with the feminine stereotype) rather than assertive (in line with the masculine stereotype) communication tactics, whereas the reverse was observed when the scandal involved a male politician. Therefore, a politician's image benefits from behaving consistently with gender stereotypes, but above all, inconsistent behaviors have detrimental effects (e.g., Courtemanche and Connor Green 2020). In particular, female politicians seem to suffer the worst sanctions when they violate gender role prescriptions (i.e., what a person should do because of their gender; Schneider, Bos, and DiFilippo 2022).

Gender stereotypes and corruption scandals

Many political scandals concern the discovery of a politician's corruption, understood as an immoral act that implies the use of public power for private ends. Such an event can have dramatic and even fatal consequences for the accused's career, as honesty is one of the most critical dimensions politicians are evaluated on (Cislak and Wojciszke 2008; Bertolotti et al. 2013). However, based on gender stereotypes, there is a greater expectation of honesty placed upon women than men (e.g., Kahn 1996); hence, we can imagine that male and female politicians involved in a corruption scandal incur different sanctions.

The idea that female politicians can be sanctioned more harshly than male politicians because of the shared belief in women's inherent honesty is not new: three theoretical frameworks suggest the importance of gender-based honesty expectations in determining the post-scandal evaluation of the involved politician. First, according to the stereotype-based backlash model (Rudman 1998; Rudman and Fairchild 2004), individuals showing counter-stereotypical behavior and traits induce negative reactions in observers.

Second, according to the shifting standards model, individuals tend to be judged with reference to the expectations associated with their category, so that they are compared with other exemplars from the same category (Biernat and Manis 1994; Biernat, Manis, and Nelson 1991). Consequently, people tend to use different morality standards for men and women: a lower one for male politicians and a higher one for female politicians.

Third, the expectancy violation theory (Burgoon 1986) advocates that negative behaviors are sanctioned more severely when performed by unexpected actors. In this respect, a female politician involved in a corruption scandal disregards the public's expectations. Consequently, she would be considered worse than a male politician committing the same violation (without disappointing the same expectation). Indeed, a test of the expectancy violation theory in the political domain (Cassese and Holman 2018), showed that politicians are particularly penalized when attacked by their opponent on stereotypical traits and issues for both their gender and party. However, female candidates, especially if Democratic, faced the worst consequences of attacks highlighting their counter-stereotypical characteristics. In this sense, a woman involved in a corruption scandal should be judged more harshly than a male colleague.

Yet, empirical evidence concerning the different sanctions due to gender-based expectations of (dis)honesty are controversial. Three out of four survey experiments (Batista Pereira 2021; Schwindt-Bayer et al. 2018) failed to find statistically significant evidence of gender-related backlash following

corruption scandals in the United States and Brazil, whereas this effect was observed in Mexico (Batista Pereira 2021). Besides contextual differences, these results may be due to methodological choices. First, Schwindt-Bayer, Esarey, and Schumacher (2018) measured backlash in terms of voting intention as a dichotomous variable, which carries less variance than a more nuanced likelihood answer and could have determined a floor effect. Batista Pereira (2021) instead used a three-item graded measure of a politician's overall popularity, manipulated the awareness of the supposed scandal between participants and actually found a significantly larger backlash effect for the female politician than the male politician in Mexico. Second, participants were asked this question only after reading that the politician was accused of corruption. Dishonesty expectations were assessed (prior to the scandal news) only by Schwindt-Bayer et al. (2018), finding that the woman was perceived as marginally less corruptible than the man. However, none of these studies tested the mediating role of expectancy violation nor compared participants' evaluations before and after knowing about the corruption scandal.

Finally, this research did not examine the role of partisanship, which could moderate the effect of the politician's gender¹ since social groups are always associated with multiple sets of context-dependent stereotypes (Bordalo et al. 2016). Indeed, the above mentioned models suggest that, beyond the influence of gender stereotypes, citizens' expectation about a politician's honesty should be also affected by cues deriving from (un)shared political affiliation between the perceiver and the target, as an in-group politician is a more unexpected actor for wrongdoing. In fact, some studies showed that participants were less likely to believe that a candidate was corrupt when they belonged to the same political party as the participant as opposed to when they belonged to different parties (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014; Beaulieu 2013). When the corruption is evident, co-partisan politicians could be sanctioned more than non-co-partisan not only because of their unexpected wrongdoing, but also because, according to the social identity theory (Tajfel 1982; Turner 1975), a strong sanction allows in-group members to preserve a positive social identity, remarking the difference between normative and deviant members. This is called the black sheep effect (Marques and Paèz 1994).

On the basis of these theories and previous results, the present study, performed in Italy, aimed to examine how disappointing expectations of honesty, derived from gender stereotypes and in-group vs. out-group affiliation, change the evaluation of a politician after a corruption scandal.

Previous studies in this domain were mainly performed in the United States or in Latin-American countries. In respect to these contexts, Italy represents a theoretically interesting case to study the consequences of political scandals because of its multi-party parliamentary system which is less polarized than those already considered, its improving level of perceived corruption since 2012,² and increasing presence of women in national-level politics.³

Since honesty is a trait stereotypically associated with women, we expected that participants' expectations of dishonesty (corruption) would be lower for the female politician than for the male politician (H1a). Therefore, their evaluation of a female politician should worsen more than the evaluation of a male politician after learning of the corruption scandal (H1b).

Moreover, as people tend to evaluate an in-group member more positively than an out-group member, we expected that participants would report lower expectations of dishonesty when the politician was an in-group member rather than an out-group member (i.e., when the politician is a member of the participant's preferred party rather than another party; H2a). Similarly, we anticipate that after the scandal the evaluation of the in-group politician would decline more than the evaluation of the out-group politician (H2b).

In addition, as previous research mostly failed to find a main effect of politicians' sex, we explored whether their political affiliation would moderate the effect of sex on both expectations of dishonesty and the pre- and post-scandal evaluations.

Finally, the impact of a corruption scandal on the evaluation of a politician should be related to the citizens' expectations of that politician's honesty. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has yet directly tested the mediating role of expectancy violation. In accordance with the expectancy violation theory (Burgoon 1986), the shifting standards model (Biernat and Manis 1994; Biernat,

Manis, and Nelson 1991), and the black sheep effect (Marques and Paèz 1994), the more expectations of honesty are disregarded by transgressive behavior, the worse the consequences for the actor. For these reasons, we expected that the effects of sex and party membership on the evaluation of the politician after the scandal would be mediated by participants' expectations of the politician's dishonesty (H3). In particular, the worsening of the post-scandal evaluation of the politician should be greater when the preliminary expectations of dishonesty are lower. Therefore, we tested a moderated mediation model (Hayes 2018).

Method

Participants

Based on an a priori power analysis conducted with G*Power (Faul et al. 2007), we set the goal of recruiting at least 104 participants, a sufficient sample to detect a medium effect size of $f = 0.25$ (Cohen 1988), with $\alpha = 0.05$ and power = 0.85, for a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed model with four groups and two measurements correlated $r = 0.00$. We recruited 138 Italian participants (48.6% women, mean age = 30.58 years, $SD = 8.93$) through personal and university student mailing lists. After selecting an "agree to participate" button to consent, participants completed an online questionnaire implemented on the LimeSurvey platform. Of these participants, 24 (17.39%) were excluded because they spent an extremely short time on the page containing the experimental manipulation (much less than the time needed to read the scenario and see the video report; see below). This percentage is below the range (14–46%) of participants that usually do not pay enough attention to researchers' instructions observed in a series of social psychological studies (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, and Davidenko 2009). Oppenheimer, Meyvis, and Davidenko (2009) suggested eliminating these participants to avoid an excessive decrease of the signal-to-noise ratio in the dataset. Two more participants were excluded because in the manipulation check they declared that they did not remember the given instructions. The retained 112 participants ranged in age from 22 to 61 years ($M = 29.8$, $SD = 8.36$) and 53.6% were women.

Procedure

Participants completed an online questionnaire that began with a consent form. Next, they read a hypothetical scenario in two steps through which we manipulated the independent variables. Unlike Batista Pereira (2021), who analyzed the evaluation of the scandalous politician in a between-participants design (comparing a condition of scandal to a control condition without scandal), we decided to adopt a more ecologically valid within-participants design. In other words, to capture the actual change due to the scandalous event, we asked all participants to evaluate the same politician both before and after learning about the scandal.

Following Cucchi and Cavazza's (2021) and Cucchi et al.'s (2021) procedure, participants read a brief presentation of a fictitious new elected member of the Parliament (detailing their education, marital status, children, political experience, interests, and current position) accompanied by their alleged image. The pictures were selected based on a pretest: 20 students (mean age = 28.05 years, $SD = 12.24$, 12 women) rated 26 depicted targets on a 10-point scale of attractiveness and indicated their perceived age. We then picked two pictures (one of a man and one of a woman) deemed equally attractive, ($M = 8.35$, $SD = 1.31$ for the man; $M = 8.70$, $SD = 0.92$ for the woman) $t(19) = 1.69$, $p = 0.106$, and young, ($M = 35.80$, $SD = 4.77$ for the man; $M = 34.65$, $SD = 6.22$ for the woman), $t(19) = 1.08$, $p = 0.295$.

Participants of the main study were randomly assigned to the 2 (politician's sex: woman vs. man) \times 2 (politician's political affiliation: in-group vs. out-group) between-participants design.⁴ Politician's sex was manipulated through the name (Luciana vs. Luciano Gualerzi) and the fictional picture. In addition, we varied the alleged political affiliation of the character by asking participants to imagine

that that he or she was either a member of their preferred party or a member of their least preferred party. Then the questionnaire asked participants to rate the politician through six impression items and two questions aimed at measuring participants' expectations about their dishonesty (see the "Measures" section below).

In the second step, participants watched a brief video report, developed especially for the present study's purposes, announcing that the politician in question was found to have accepted a bribe. After this video, respondents were asked to report the political affiliation of the politician (in-group vs. out-group manipulation check). Two participants failed to remember the out-group affiliation and were thus placed in the in-group condition. The rest of the questionnaire included the measures for the impression of the candidate (the same six items used in the first step), control measures (rating the politician's attractiveness and severity of the scandal, respondents' political interest, respondents' political orientation), and the participants' sociodemographic information (gender, age, education). All the procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the American Psychological Association's ethical standards for the treatment of human participants. Since the data collection was anonymous and involved no identifying information and no medical treatment, no ethics approval for the study was needed according to our university's guidelines. In the questionnaire's introduction, participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that they could cancel their participation at any time, and that their data would be treated anonymously.

Measures

Evaluation of the political actor

Following Cucchi and Cavazza (2021), we asked participants to rate the politician twice – once before and once after learning about the scandal news – by means of four adjectives (honest, strong, empathic, competent) on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). In addition, they reported on the same 5-point scale their level of trust in the fictitious politician (i.e., "To what extent does Luciana/o Gualerzi inspire confidence in her/him") and indicated on a 10-point scale their global attitude toward them ("If you had to express an overall opinion on Luciana/o Gualerzi on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 = 'completely negative' and 10 = 'completely positive') what grade would you give her/him?"). After having transformed all the scores to range from 0 to 1, two explorative factor analyses revealed a single factor for both evaluations: 49.96% explained variance, factor loadings >0.57 before the scandal; 53.63% explained variance, factor loadings >0.58 after the scandal. Therefore, we calculated two evaluation indexes of the politician: before the scandal ($\alpha = 0.78$; $M = 0.62$, $SD = 0.13$) and after the scandal ($\alpha = 0.81$ $M = 0.20$, $SD = 0.14$).

Expectations about politicians' dishonesty

Before the scandal news was presented, respondents indicated on two 5-point scales, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very*): I) "how likely is it that Luciana/o Gualerzi has been involved in a scandal in the last year?;" and II) "how likely is it that Luciana/o Gualerzi will end up in the newspapers for a scandal next year?." We built an index as a mean of the two items and transformed it to range from 0 to 1, $r(110) = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$; $M = 0.40$, $SD = 0.19$.

Results

Preliminary analyses estimated the association between the post-scandal evaluation of the political actor (our crucial dependent variable) and the politician's attractiveness, respondents' gender, education, political orientation, degree of interest in politics, and perceived scandal severity. Only the last variable was correlated with post-scandal evaluation of the politician (Table 1). In addition, the two presented politicians were perceived as equally attractive, $t(110) = 0.64$, $p = 0.525$. As such, only perceived scandal severity will be considered a covariate in the subsequent analyses involving the politicians' evaluations.⁵

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among the Study Variables.

	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Politician's attractiveness	3.38 (1.15)	–					
2. Respondents' political orientation	4.79 (2.52)	–0.07	–				
3. Respondents' interest in politics	3.22 (1.03)	–0.23*	–0.12	–			
4. Perceived scandal severity	4.73 (0.64)	0.17	–0.01	–0.02	–		
5. Expectation of politician's dishonesty	2.60 (0.77)	0.11	0.13	–0.17	–0.07	–	
6. Pre scandal global evaluation of the politician	0.62 (0.12)	0.10	0.01	–0.04	0.06	–0.50**	–
7. Post scandal global evaluation of the politician	0.21 (0.14)	0.02	0.11	–0.05	–0.46**	0.12	0.01

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Expectations of dishonesty

The first 2 (politician's sex: woman vs. man) \times 2 (politician's political affiliation: in-group vs. out-group) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on expectations of dishonesty. In contrast with H1a and H2a, no main effect emerged for the two independent variables, but their interaction reached statistical significance, $F(1, 108) = 7.69$, $p = 0.007$, $\eta^2_p = 0.07$. When the female politician was a member of the in-group, the expectation of dishonesty was lower than when she was an out-group member (*simple effect* = 0.15, $SE = 0.05$, $CI [0.05, 0.25]$),⁶ whereas the same difference did not reach statistical significance for the male politician (*simple effect* = –0.05, $SE = 0.05$, $CI[-0.16, 0.05]$). In addition, for the out-group politician, the politician's sex did not affect the respondents' expectation about their levels of dishonesty (*simple effect* = 0.36, $SE = 0.21$, 95% $CI [-0.78, 0.06]$), whereas for the in-group politician, the expectation of dishonesty was lower when the politician was a woman than when he was a man (*simple effect* = 0.44, $SE = 0.20$, 95% $CI [0.05, 0.83]$; see [Figure 1](#)).

Effect of the scandal

To test H1b and H2b, and to explore whether political affiliation moderates the effect of the politician's sex on both expectations of dishonesty and their pre- and post-scandal evaluation, we performed a 2 (politician's sex) \times 2 (politician's political affiliation) \times 2 (evaluation of the politician before and after the scandal) mixed ANOVA, with the latter as the repeated factor. Again, in contrast with H1b and H2b, only the three-way interaction among the two independent variables and the repeated factor proved to be statistically significant, $F(1, 107) = 11.43$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.10$ (see [Figure 2](#)). The

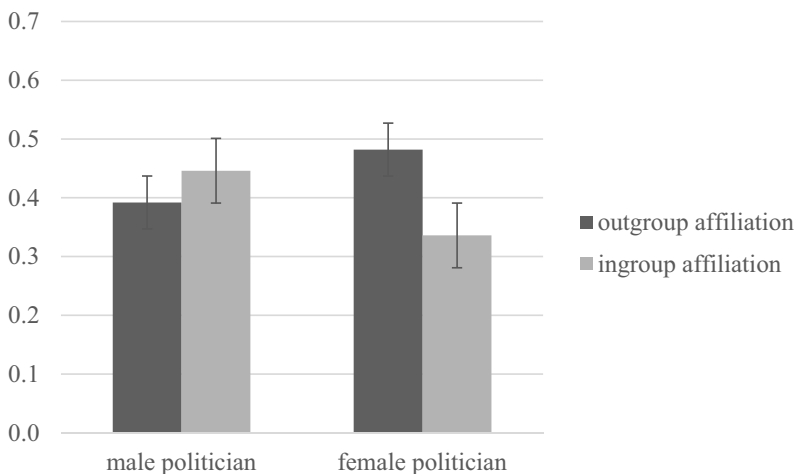


Figure 1. Expectations About Politician's Dishonesty as a Function of Their Gender and Political Affiliation (In-Group versus Out-Group).

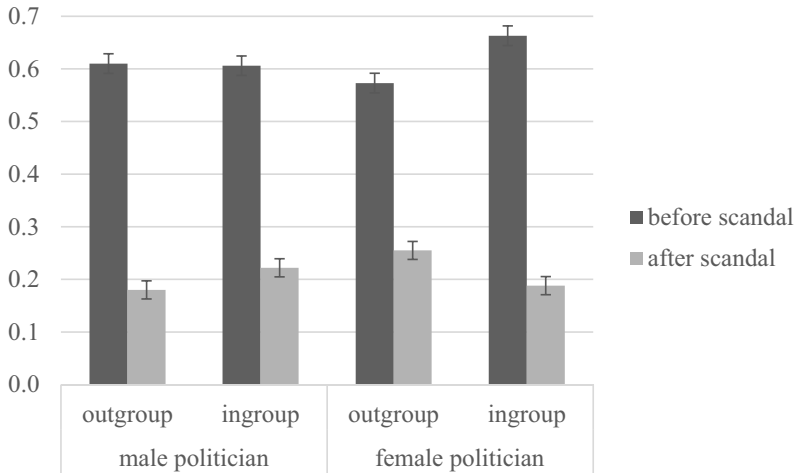


Figure 2. Pre- and Post-Scandal Global Evaluation of the Politician as a Function of Their Gender and Political Affiliation (In-Group versus Out-Group).

inspection of simple effects showed that the evaluation of the female politician decreased more when she was a member of the in-group than when she was a member of the out-group (*simple effect* = 0.16, *SE* = 0.05, 95% *CI* [0.07, 0.25]). The evaluation of the male politician decreased after the scandal irrespective of his political affiliation (*simple effect* = 0.06, *SE* = 0.05, 95% *CI* [-0.15, 0.03]). In addition, when the politician was an in-group member, the woman was evaluated more harshly than the man (*single effect* = 0.09, *SE* = 0.04, 95% *CI* [0.01, 0.18]), whereas the opposite was true when the target was an out-group member (*simple effect* = 0.13, *SE* = 0.05, 95% *CI* [-0.22, -0.03]).

Moderated mediation

Finally, we tested the moderated mediation model illustrated in Figure 3 using PROCESS model 7 (Hayes 2018) and setting 5,000 bootstrap resamples. In line with H3, the effect of the politician’s sex on their pre- and post-scandal difference in global evaluation was conditionally mediated by respondents’ expectations about the politician’s dishonesty, with the gender-expectation link moderated by politician’s affiliation (index of moderated mediation = 0.08, *SE* = 0.04, 95% *CI* [0.02, 0.17]). For the out-group politician, the conditional indirect effect of being a woman was not significant (*CIE* = -0.03,

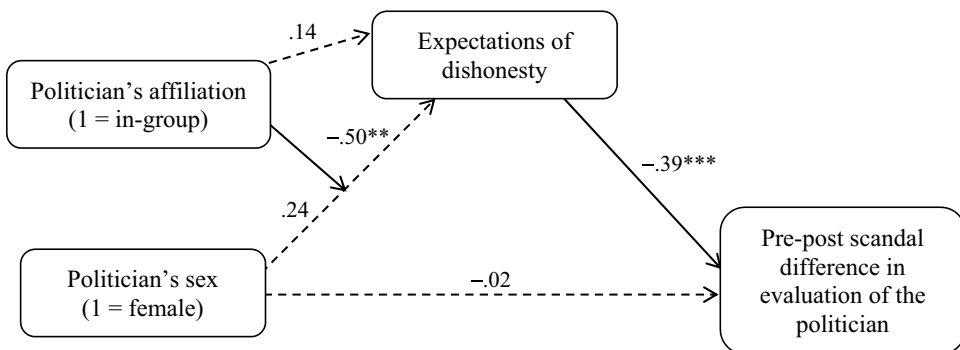


Figure 3. The Resultant Model of Moderated Mediation. Standardized beta coefficients are reported.

$SE = 0.03$, 95% $CI [-0.10, 0.01]$). When the female politician was a member of the in-group, she elicited the lowest expectation of dishonesty; thus, when scandalous behavior betrayed these expectations, the perpetrator was more severely sanctioned ($CIE = 0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% $CI [0.01, 0.09]$).

Discussion

That women in politics have a harder time than men due to gender stereotypes is well established. Less clear is whether and why women have more to lose in terms of reputation in the case of a scandal, as findings are controversial in these regards.

The present study highlights that gender stereotypes and those based on target – perceiver shared political affiliation act together to generate expectations of (dis)honesty about a given politician, thus affecting the post-scandal evaluation. Indeed, our participants expressed different expectations about a politician's honesty in relation to their sex and political affiliation to one's own preferred party: respondents considered an in-group woman less likely to be involved in a corruption scandal than an out-group woman, whereas the same distinction was not relevant for the male politician. In line with previous survey experiments (Batista Pereira 2021; Schwindt-Bayer, Esarey, and Schumacher 2018) conducted in Brazil and the United States, sex categorization alone failed to elicit different expectations of honesty. This could be due to the procedure making the categorization of the target as "politician" particularly salient in respect to their sex. According to the leaders-not-ladies theory (Brooks 2013), women in politics tend not to be seen primarily as a member of their gender category but as part of the politician category. As such, that a politician is a woman could be perceived as insufficiently informative without considering her party affiliation. Future studies could test if contextual cues that make gender stereotypes more salient promote the anticipated expectations of female honesty.

Also the mere in-group/out-group categorization of the target was not enough to elicit differential expectations about their honesty. However, it proved useful in moderating the effect of the politician sex. In line with the parallel processing model (Schneider and Bos 2016), our findings showed that two identities (i.e., gender and political affiliation), interacted and jointly influenced the perception of a political actor.

As a consequence of the higher expectations of one's own party female politician, our results showed that she was also the most damaged by a corruption scandal. This is consistent with previous research (Cassese and Holman 2018) showing that a female politician attacked on female stereotypical dimensions was more penalized than a male counterpart, especially when she was a Democrat (it is worth noting that participants in those studies were predominantly liberal). This is also in line with the backlash effect found in Mexico manipulating the corruption scandal between participants (Batista Pereira 2021). In addition, Schwindt-Bayer, Esarey, and Schumacher (2018) argue that the negative association between women's representation and corruption is stronger in countries where voters can actually punish politicians at the voting booth because women are more heavily sanctioned than men when they violate gender-stereotypical expectations of honesty. Therefore, since Italy has a fair level of accountability (it is 38th in the 2020 World Bank Voice and Accountability Index⁷), our results are consistent with this differential treatment hypothesis of gender and corruption (Schwindt-Bayer, Esarey, and Schumacher 2018).

To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first to manipulate politician's affiliation as well as their sex and explicitly test the mediating role of expectancy violation in explaining the negative effects of corruption scandals in the political domain. We also believe that our study overcame some of the limitations of previous work (Batista Pereira 2021; Schwindt-Bayer, Esarey, and Schumacher 2018). First, our within-subjects design, analyzing the variations in a politician's evaluation before and after a scandal strikes, increased the ecological validity of our results. In the same line, our use of a video about the scandal news, instead of a vignette as in previous studies, enhances the realism of the experiment. Second, we adopted a stronger manipulation of the scandal severity, while previous studies suggested that the politician was only suspected of taking a bribe. In addition, our study was performed in a different

political and cultural context compared to the previous research, and thus speaks to the generalizability of the effects of gender stereotypes and partisanship on scandal consequences outside the Americas.

To sum up, these results confirm that when a scandal breaks, the betrayal of gender stereotypical honesty expectations, in conjunction with in-group/out-group expectations, is responsible for the propensity to sanction more harshly an in-group woman than a man. In particular, in line with the expectancy violation theory (Burgoon 1986), the shifting standards model (Biernat and Manis 1994; Biernat, Manis, and Nelson 1991), and the differential treatment hypothesis of gender and corruption (Schwindt-Bayer et al. 2018), the post-scandal loss of support was stronger when prior expectations of dishonesty were weak.

Some limitations, which could inspire future research, must be acknowledged. First, we used a rather small convenience sample of Italian participants, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings. Second, a feature of our design – the task of evaluating a fictitious politician – may underestimate the effect of scandalous politician perceptions. While this procedure allowed us to control for preexisting attitude contamination, the limited information available to participants may have reduced the realism of the scenario and boosted the punishments for corruption (McDonald 2020). In the same vein, fake politicians and settings may also enhance other socially desirable responses, such as participants' attempt to suppress their own gender bias. Third, since gender stereotypes are social constructions that, though widespread, are specific to contexts and times, we cannot consider honesty expectation from female politician as universal. Future studies should deepen cultural variations or what would happen, for example, if women are repeatedly accused of corruption (e.g., Le Foulon and Reyes-Housholder 2021). In addition, expectations other than honesty could explain why male and female corruption could be differently sanctioned, such as the perception of different levels of risk aversion or institutional constraints (Barnes and Beaulieu 2019).

Nonetheless, this research makes a theoretical contribution in extending previous results about gender stereotypes and expectancy violation in the political domain (e.g., Cassese and Holman 2018) and directly confirming the differential treatment hypothesis of gender and corruption (Schwindt-Bayer et al. 2018). As for the practical implications, our results may help explain why, despite the better evaluations female (vs. male) politicians receive from the public (Cavazza 2016; Cavazza and Guidetti 2014), women in politics are still a minority. Indeed, given the primary role of honesty in politicians' judgments (Cislak and Wojciszke 2008; Bertolotti et al. 2013) and the higher moral standards women are expected to conform to (Kahn 1996), getting into politics is still riskier for women than for men.

Notes

1. In Schwindt-Bayer et al. (2018) study, the politician was from the participants' own party throughout; however, there was no check that the participants actually remembered and considered this information.
2. <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/italy>.
3. <https://documenti.camera.it/Leg18/Dossier/Pdf/AC0340.Pdf>.
4. The experimental material and dataset are available at https://osf.io/9pmb6/?view_only=bd2d9c722d9f4d9c99c949f631023b05.
5. The pattern of results remains the same without the covariate.
6. The reported simple effects were all adjusted applying the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons.
7. The United States was 57th, Brazil 91st, and Mexico 115th.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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