

Delivering Bad News to Followers: Leaders' Cognitive Reappraisal vs. Suppression Requests on  
Followers' Emotion Regulation and Leader-Follower Relations

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*Author Note.* We would like to acknowledge funding received from Turkish Science Foundation (TUBITAK, Project# 108K421). We thank seminar participants in Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Sabancı University School of Management for their helpful feedback.

### **Abstract**

We investigated the effects of leaders' emotional regulation request (suppression or cognitive reappraisal) on follower's felt and expressed anger and attitudes, as well as the effect of follower's expressed anger on leaders' attitudes toward followers. Study 1 using a 2x3 experimental design, examined the role of a hypothetical female/male leader's suppression/cognitive-reappraisal request following the delivery of bad news on followers' (229 undergraduates) felt/expressed anger and attitudes toward the leader. Results indicated that leader's reappraisal request was more successful in decreasing felt anger compared to a control condition as well as decreasing expressed anger compared to both suppression request and control condition. Female leaders who requested suppression were evaluated less favorably than male leaders when followers held stereotypical attitudes towards female leadership. Study 2 showed that leaders' (n = 32 executives) are more likely to perceive the expressed anger of followers' and develop negative attitudes towards them following a suppression versus a reappraisal request. We found that regardless of followers' gender, leaders' attitudes were more positive when perceived follower anger was low.

**Keywords:** *Leadership; Emotion Regulation; Anger; Gender; Implicit Attitudes*

### **Delivering Bad News to Followers: Gender and the Impact of Cognitive Reappraisal vs. Suppression Requests on Followers' Emotion Regulation and Leader-Follower Relations**

Leaders increasingly have to be the bearer of bad news or defend an unpopular point of view or decision. Such occasions are powerful sources of emotion not only for leaders but also for their followers. Indeed delivering bad news is perhaps far more personal and emotionally consequential for the leader-follower relationship than other events. Poor leadership happens when managers distance themselves from the delivery of bad news to avoid facing blame from defensive employees and in the process failing to treat them with dignity and help manage their emotions (Folger & Skarlicki, 2001). The myth of rationality surrounding organizations (Putnam & Mumby, 1993) and masculine stereotypes with respect to the act of managing (Schein, Mueller, Lituchi, & Liu, 1996) reinforce these bad habits of leaders who need to help their followers regulate their emotions successfully to be more effective.

Previous theory and research on the intersection of leadership and affect in organizations predominantly focused on the role of leaders' styles, affective states and emotional expressions as well as their generic emotional competencies on followers' perceptions, emotions and/or performance (e.g., Barsade, 2002; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; George, 2000; Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawver, 2008). Although, the case has been made that one of the major tasks of leaders is to manage the experience and expression of emotions of their followers (e.g., Goleman, 1998; Humphrey, 2002; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), to this date, there is a lack of empirical research on the influence of leaders on followers' regulation of their felt and expressed emotions and the potential boundary conditions surrounding this influence. A related research area that requires further attention is whether or not the effectiveness of emotion management attempts have the potential to affect the attitudes of leader and follower toward each other (for reviews, see, Gooty, Connelly, Griffith & Gupta, 2010; Rajah, Song, & Arvey, 2011).

Researchers in the emotional labor area argued (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983) and showed that employees who are expected to regulate their emotions towards customers according to emotional display rules can use one of two emotion regulation strategies, *expression suppression* or *cognitive reappraisal* (Gross, 1998a). The question of “which of these specific strategies leaders can utilize to help followers successfully regulate their negative emotions and administer emotional display rules?” is an important one since the management of followers’ frustration and optimism is a major way leaders influence their followers (Humphrey, 2002). The strategies followers end up using to regulate their emotions is not only important for their task performance but also for the quality of the exchange they have with their leader (Glasø & Einarsen, 2008). Just as employees are expected to regulate their emotions towards irate customers, they also need to learn the display rules governing emotional interactions with their leaders. Effective emotion regulation strategies can not only help followers control their negative emotions such as anger but also help develop a positive image in the eyes of the leader. Therefore, our first aim is to examine the effects of leaders’ requests for the use of emotional regulation strategies on followers’ emotions, specifically felt and expressed anger, as well as the attitudes of follower’s and leaders towards each other. We focus on anger because its presence suggests that a communication or action by another person (e.g., leader) is construed as a demeaning offense, and that potential for aggression and a negative, spiteful relationship is increased. Another issue that requires empirical attention with respect to emotions and leadership is gender. Even though it is clear that prejudice toward female leadership is widespread (Eagly & Karau, 2002), emotional displays rules are gender-bound (LaFrance & Banaji, 1992) and there are gender differences in the strategies preferred for emotion regulation (Gross & John, 2003), the literature on the intersection of leadership and affect is mostly silent on the role of gender in this process. Although, there is some empirical work on the role of leaders’ gender in the effects

of their emotional displays (Glomb & Hulin, 1997; Lewis, 2000), to date only one study focused on the role of leaders' gender on followers' reactions to their emotion management attempts (Byron, 2008). We believe that stereotypic attitudes towards female leaders would lead to more negative reactions to female leaders' compared to male leaders' requests for use of specific emotion regulation strategies. Therefore, our second aim is to examine the role of leader gender and follower attitudes towards female leadership on the relationship between leaders' requests for emotional regulation and follower's emotional reactions and attitudes toward their leader.

In summary, the present research makes a number of important contributions to the literature on leadership and emotions. First, by investigating specific requests by leaders we change the focus from leaders' style, emotional displays or general emotional competence to what leaders can actually do or say to manage their followers' discrete emotions. Second, by examining the congruence between leaders' actions and follower's individual dispositions we test a person-situation interaction model of anger regulation. Finally, by investigating leaders' gender we attempt to identify the challenges female leaders might face when they are trying deliver bad news and manage their followers' negative emotions.

#### *Anger and Emotion Regulation in Leader-Follower Relationship*

Emotions are defined as “adaptive behavioral and physiological response tendencies that are called forth directly by evolutionarily significant situations” (Gross, 1998a, p. 272). Unlike incidental affective states such as moods or affective dispositions, emotions are integral affective responses that are elicited by perceived or imagined features of a target object (Pham, 2007). Through a process of categorization (Pham, 2007) individuals map target objects onto existing cognitive structures or schemas and, depending on the activated schema (e.g., dishonest manager), a particular value-laden emotional response follows (e.g., anger, disappointment). Perception of injustice is a powerful instigator for longer lasting and intense negative emotions of

all kinds (Mikula, Sherer, & Athenstaedt, 1998), but especially anger (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996; Weiss, Suckow, & Cropanzano, 1999). Anger/annoyance was also the most common negative emotional reaction recalled in response to leader behaviors indicating poor communication and a lack of awareness and respect (Dasborough, 2006).

Organizations with their power hierarchies are especially prone to the generation of strong emotional responses and to the development of a variety of emotional scripts (Gibson, 2008). These emotional scripts form guides to appropriate behavior in interpersonal interactions and provide a means to interpret the actions of others (Gibson, 2008). In fact, there is a dominant emotional norm in most professions that imposes coolness, toughness, or rationality at work (Fischer, Manstead, Evers, Timmers, & Valk, 2004). Employees are expected to be calm and collected when they are dealing with a variety of specific and general stressors at work such as an irate customer, an important negotiation, an uncivil manager, work overload or threat of job loss. Individuals over time learn these normatively held expectations about how specific others (e.g., managers) are likely to react to expressions of specific emotions. These shared expectations not only effect employees' perceptions of emotional display rules but also their use of emotion regulation strategies (Diefendorff, Erickson, Grandey, & Dahling, 2011). Indeed, research indicates that negative emotions such as disappointment, uncertainty, and annoyance are typically suppressed, while positive emotions such as enthusiasm, interest, and calmness are typically expressed or faked by employees (Glasø & Einarsen, 2008).

Managers acting as leaders are not only expected to control their own emotional expressions but also are tasked with facilitating employees' adoption of emotional display rules (Seymour & Sandiford, 2005) and help them manage their emotions by regulating their expressions (Humphrey, 2002). Learning the clues to how they should live out their emotional experiences in professional life is especially important for newcomers who may have their own

idiosyncratic and sometimes conflicting emotional scripts. An especially important and strong emotional script is about what happens when an employee expresses negative emotions, such as anger or annoyance, towards higher status individuals. In their dual-threshold model of anger expression in organizations Geddes and Callister (2007) argued for the existence of two hypothetical thresholds, expression and impropriety, that distinguish three forms of anger - suppressed, expressed, and deviant. They suggest that although expressed anger can be potentially beneficial for the individual, an organization's emotion display norms may not allow members to express their anger, essentially closing the space between the two thresholds. One important factor that implicitly or explicitly proscribes the expression of anger is lower status and/or lower legitimacy of organizational members. Prior work revealed that anger and status are intimately linked (Ratcliff, Bernstein, Cundiff, & Vescio, 2012; Tiedens, 2001; Tiedens, Ellsworth, & Mesquita, 2000) suggesting that people associate the expression of anger with higher status on-the-fly in social perception. Lower status organizational members are therefore expected to attempt to hide their anger they feel after having been delivered bad news or unfairly treated by their leaders to avoid being seen as violating social scripts and projecting a poor image to their superiors.

Leaders are commonly tasked with delivery of bad news to followers, from requests for overtime to providing negative performance feedback and announcing layoffs. Such occasions of leader-follower interaction present challenges for leaders to manage the potential negative impact of the bad news on followers' emotions. If their felt anger intensity is high, despite their lower status, followers may not be able to regulate their anger (Geddes & Callister, 2007). While ineffective leaders may fail to acknowledge the potential role of such negative emotions during the delivery of bad news (Folger & Skarlicki, 2001), effective leaders may not only acknowledge these emotions but also remind followers' the display norms in an attempt to assist in their

management. We argue that these reminders would be in the form of emotion regulation requests, which would essentially signal that the expression and impropriety thresholds are spaced very narrowly and any expression of anger would be considered deviant, thus potentially damaging an individual's professional reputation (Geddes & Callister, 2007).

Emotion regulation refers to “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them and how they experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998a, p. 275). Gross (1998a) has provided a classification of these emotion regulation strategies (antecedent-focused vs. response-focused strategies) in his process model of emotion regulation. Two strategies that received the most attention in the literature—cognitive reappraisal and expression suppression—are also the focus of the present study. As an antecedent focused strategy, cognitive reappraisal comes early in the emotion-generative process and involves reframing the situation in order to change one's reaction. It consists of changing the way a situation is construed so as to change its affective meaning and decrease its emotional impact. Expression suppression on the other hand, is a response-focused strategy and comes later in the emotion generative process. It involves manipulating the expression by inhibiting the outward signs of the inner feelings. In other words, it involves the effortful control of a dominant emotional response in favor of a subdominant one. Leaders attempting to assist their followers regulate their negative emotions such as anger can focus their emotional coaching on facilitating cognitive reappraisal or expressive suppression. Which of these strategies would be more helpful in terms of followers' felt anger, expressed anger and attitudes towards the leader? Does one of them have more to recommend than the other when followers are dealing with feelings of anger triggered by bad news?

According to Gross's (1998a) process model of emotion regulation, strategies that act early in the emotion-generative process should have a different profile of consequences than



strategies that act later on. Indeed, experimental and individual-difference studies find reappraisal is often a more effective emotion regulation strategy than suppression (Gross, 1998b; 1999; 2007): Reappraisal decreases emotion experience as well as behavioral expression, and has no impact on memory. In contrast, suppression decreases behavioral expression, but fails to decrease emotion experience, and actually impairs memory. Chronic reappraisers are successful at down-regulating negative emotions, even in the context of a potent negative emotion such as anger (Mauss, Cook, Cheng, & Gross, 2007). Geddes and Callister (2007), when they discuss silent anger and its outcomes in their dual threshold model, also suggest cognitive reframing (i.e., reappraisal) to be superior to attempts to hide or mask anger (i.e., suppression).

The arguments and findings discussed above with respect to reappraisal and suppression as emotion regulation strategies are true when individuals choose and implement these strategies themselves and do not necessarily apply to requests to use these strategies. Though a number of studies suggest that they also generalize to situations in which the use of these strategies are requested by others. For example, studying the effects of suppression vs. reappraisal on social interactive decision making, van't Wout, Chang, and Sanfey (2010) found that individuals who were asked to reappraise were more likely to accept an inequitable condition in an ultimatum game compared to others who were asked to suppress or use no regulation strategy. In another study, women who were asked to suppress their emotions had increased negative emotional experiences with respect to their partner (Butler, Egloff, Wilhelm, Smith, Erickson, & Gross, 2003). Finally, in two recent empirical studies Thiel and his colleagues found that leader-facilitated reappraisal (compared to downward social comparison) led to more success in regulating followers' anger (Thiel, Connelly, & Griffith, 2012) and leader-facilitated suppression's ability to lower work-stress following an emotional event was dependent on the empathy displayed by the leader (Thiel, Griffith, & Connelly, in press). Therefore, we argue that

reappraisal as opposed to suppression request would be more successful in helping followers manage their anger in response to bad news. Specifically, follower felt/expressed anger would be low if the leaders asked the followers to cognitively refocus and actively change the way they construe the meaning of the bad news as opposed to requesting the followers to act professionally by suppressing their emotions.

*Hypothesis 1a.* Leaders' requests for use of cognitive reappraisal as opposed to expression suppression or no emotion regulation request will lead to lower levels of felt anger by followers in response to bad news delivered by the leader.

*Hypothesis 1b.* Leaders' requests for use of cognitive reappraisal as opposed to expression suppression or no emotion regulation request will lead to lower levels of expressed anger by followers in response to bad news delivered by the leader.

When followers are able to regulate their emotions successfully with the help of their leader they may judge their leader more positively and prefer to keep their working relationship intact. In contrast, feelings of anger triggered by the news may spill over to more deliberate judgments and lead to negative evaluations of the leader if the recommended strategy is not successful in regulating negative emotions. Consistent with these expectations, Butler and colleagues (2003) found that women who were asked to suppress their emotions had not only increased negative emotions but also had a deteriorating relationship with their partners.

Therefore, we expect leader's emotion regulation requests to affect attitudes towards the leader. Specifically, followers' who are asked to reappraise rather than suppress their negative emotions or not requested to use an emotional regulation strategy (i.e., control) are expected to hold more positive attitudes towards their leaders.

*Hypothesis 2.* Leaders' requests for use of cognitive reappraisal as opposed to expression suppression or no emotion regulation request will lead to higher positive attitudes by followers towards the leader following bad news delivered by the leader.

*Boundary Condition: Stereotypical Attitudes towards Female Leadership*

Our hypotheses on the outcomes of leaders' requests for emotion regulation are consistent with theory and research that argues the importance of emotional competencies for effective leadership (George, 2000; Goleman, 1998). Indeed, the fourth component of emotional intelligence is the ability to manage others' emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) which partly involves airing and acknowledgement of emotions rather than their suppression. Requests for expression suppression are suggested to project lower levels of leader empathy and authenticity than requests for cognitive reappraisal (Gardner, Fischer, & Hunt, 2009). Individuals who indicated a lack of empathy by making suppression requests have been shown to less likely emerge as leaders (Pescosolido, 2002). On the other hand, requesting suppression can be especially problematic for female leaders when the follower in question expects them to act empathically. In other words, followers' gender stereotypic leadership perceptions may moderate the effects of such requests depending on whether the request is coming from male or female leaders. The prevalent female stereotypes portray women as nurturing, affectionate and caring as opposed to dominant, assertive and self-sufficient (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women's leadership has been argued to face two specific hurdles related to these stereotypes: a) Women are not preferred as leaders because their stereotypic characteristics do not fit with the role of leadership; b) Women leaders who try to fit in to the leadership role by acting outside of their gender roles are evaluated negatively (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Requesting suppression of feelings as a strategy for emotion regulation may therefore backfire for female leaders if followers held gender stereotypes as truisms. Consistent with this argument, in a vignette study, Byron (2008) found

that participants were more satisfied with female leaders when they showed empathy and responded to a follower's emotions, but failing to attend to emotion resulted in lower satisfaction ratings for female, but not male, managers. However, Byron (2008) did not measure emotions and/or emotion regulation. We argue that following the delivery of bad news, female leaders' suppression requests would trigger feelings of anger and lead to negative attitudes towards them for followers who held stereotypic attitudes towards women leadership. In contrast to suppression requests, requests to cognitively reappraise the situation may be more in line with stereotypic expectations from women leaders. When female leaders ask for a reappraisal, this might be considered as a sign of their affection or empathy. Stereotypic expectations from female leaders to show more positive affection towards followers are consistent with their use of a reappraisal request to change followers' focus from negative to positive affect.

In contrast, stereotypically, males are portrayed to be emotionally stoic and less engaged affectively with others compared to their female counterparts. Therefore, male leaders requesting "professionalism" through suppression may not be negatively evaluated by followers who hold stereotypical attitudes against female leadership (i.e., positively biased toward male leadership). Males not only use suppression as a strategy more than females (Gross & John, 2003) but due to masculine stereotypes, they are also expected to be less expressive and act more "professional" by using suppression, especially when they feel sad (i.e., "men don't cry"). Therefore, shows of empathy are generally not expected from male leaders. Their requests to follow display rules and suppress anger would likely be considered normal by prejudiced followers. In fact, such stereotype consistent behaviors are expected to buffer followers' feelings of anger and increase their positive attitudes towards male leaders even when they are associated with failures (c.f., Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008). Therefore, we expect the gender of the leader and the followers' stereotypical attitudes towards female leadership to moderate the influence of leaders'

requests for suppression versus reappraisal on followers' felt and expressed anger as well as their attitudes towards the leader. In the terminology of the dual threshold model of expressed anger (Geddes & Callister, 2007), prejudiced followers are more likely to pass the expression threshold when they respond to a female leader who violates gender roles as they may not perceive status differences with them as much as they do with male leaders.

Although followers may hold stereotypic attitudes of women's leadership, they may not be aware of them and/or report them when asked. Therefore self-report measures of stereotypical attitudes may not produce valid results especially when the topic is socially sensitive and individuals are motivated to manage their impressions (Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009). Individuals hold implicit attitudes towards groups such as women that influence their specific judgments and behaviors towards the members of those groups (Greenwald, Banaji, Rudman, Farnham, Nosek, & Mellott, 2002). Such implicit stereotypes are more likely to play a role in their judgments when individuals' regulatory resources are depleted while trying to suppress those particular stereotypes (Gordijn, Hindriks, Koomen, Dijksterhuis, & Van Knippenberg, 2004). Apart from attempts to suppress stereotypic thoughts, attempts to suppress feelings of anger also deplete regulatory resources. Indeed, relative to sadness and neutral emotion, anger has been shown to activate heuristic processing including more stereotypic judgments, less attention to the quality of the arguments, and more attention to the superficial cues of the message (e.g., Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994; Tiedens & Linton, 2001, Study 2). Individuals faced with a female leader's request to suppress their negative emotions are expected to respond based on automatic evaluations of the female leader and fall prey to their implicit attitudes. Based on this, we argue that followers' implicit, relative to explicit stereotypical attitudes toward female leadership, are more likely to be the culprit of their biased emotional and cognitive reactions toward female leaders. Therefore, we hypothesize the

following, and test these hypotheses using both implicit and explicit measures of stereotypical attitudes toward women's leadership.

*Hypothesis 3a.* Female leaders' requests for suppression (reappraisal) as opposed to reappraisal (suppression) will generate more (less) felt anger in followers who hold implicitly stereotypical attitudes towards women's leadership. In contrast, male leaders' requests for suppression (reappraisal) as opposed to reappraisal (suppression) will generate less (more) felt anger by followers who hold implicitly stereotypical attitudes towards women's leadership.

*Hypothesis 3b.* Female leaders' requests for suppression (reappraisal) as opposed to reappraisal (suppression) will generate more (less) expressed anger by followers who hold implicitly stereotypical attitudes towards women's leadership. On the other hand, male leaders' requests for suppression (reappraisal) as opposed to reappraisal (suppression) will generate less (more) expressed anger by followers who hold implicitly stereotypical attitudes towards women's leadership.

*Hypothesis 3c.* Female leaders' requests for suppression (reappraisal) as opposed to reappraisal (suppression) will generate lower (higher) attitudes by followers who hold implicitly stereotypical attitudes towards women's leadership. On the other hand, male leaders' requests for suppression (reappraisal) as opposed to reappraisal (suppression) will generate higher (lower) attitudes by followers who hold implicitly stereotypical attitudes towards women's leadership.

#### *Leader's Response to Follower's Expressed Anger*

Individuals who display authentic anger are generally judged less favorably than individuals who display no emotion (Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996; Glomb & Hulin, 1997). This would especially be so when the anger is expressed by those occupying lower status roles in

vertical relationships. The downstream consequences of felt anger can result in externally visible behaviors and cues that become, in turn, the eliciting stimulus for interaction partners (Cote, 2005). Anger also encourages conflict and aggression in the observers (Averill, 1983). Therefore, the desirability of emotions such as anger should be assessed in terms of how they influence an individual's ability to function as a member of a collective (Pham, 2007). We argue that expressions of anger as a reaction to suppression request would be deemed by perceivers as deviant and hostile. In terms of the dual threshold model such hostile expressions of anger can be considered to pass to the impropriety threshold (Geddes & Callister, 2007). Therefore we argue that leaders' suppression requests trigger a vicious cycle and affect their perceptions of and attitudes toward the follower.

*Hypothesis 4a.* Leaders will have more favorable attitudes toward followers when the followers react to leaders' requests to reappraise negative emotions versus when they react to leaders' requests to suppress negative emotions.

*Hypothesis 4b.* Leaders' perceptions of anger will mediate the effect of their emotion regulation request (suppression vs. reappraisal) on their attitudes toward the followers.

Gender of the followers can be a boundary condition on how leaders react to expressions of anger from followers. Even though previous studies noted no statistically reliable gender difference on the likelihood of suppressing or expressing anger (see, LaFrance & Banaji, 1992 for a review), some investigators suggested that anger is stereotypically linked with males, whereas other emotions such as sadness and fear are typical of females. Consistent with this suggestion, Birnbaum and Croll (1984) showed that, as early as preschool age, children associate anger with males and fear and sadness with females. Such stereotypic expectations place greater social pressure on women than on men to regulate the display of anger (Smith, Ulch, Cameron, & Cumberland, 1989). Consequently, we believe, in addition to expectations from lower status

individuals to avoid expressions of anger to their higher status counterparts; the gender stereotypical expectations may also play a role in the development of attitudes towards followers. We expect leaders to react more negatively towards female followers who expressed their anger relative to male followers.

*Hypothesis 5.* The effect of follower's expressed anger on leader's attitudes toward the follower will be moderated by follower gender: Attitudes toward female followers will be less favorable than attitudes toward male followers in the case of high expressed anger. There will be no differences in attitudes toward female vs. male followers in the case of low expressed anger.

### **Study 1**

Study 1 examines the effects of leader emotional regulation request strategies (suppression vs. reappraisal) on followers' felt and expressed anger and their attitudes toward their leader, following the delivery of bad news. As a boundary condition for these relationships we examine leader gender and stereotypical attitudes towards women's leadership. Hence, Study 1 focuses specifically on Hypotheses 1a to 3c.

### **Method**

#### *Sample*

The data were collected from undergraduates from two universities in Istanbul, Turkey. Participants were recruited from their courses in management and psychology departments in exchange for course credit. They first completed an online survey about a week before coming to the lab for the experiment. Over 300 students answered the online survey but many did not show up for the experiment. Out of 254 participants who attended the experimental session, data from



25 students were extracted from the analysis as the manipulation checks revealed that these participants did not follow the instructions of the experiment. Therefore the data from 229 students (143 female, 62.2 %) were used to test the hypotheses. However, due to missing data, some of the analyses reported in the results section include 220 participants. One hundred sixty-two of the participants had worked as interns or had part- or full-time work experience.

### *Design*

Study 1 included a 2X3 experimental design (leader gender: male or female) x (leader emotion regulation request condition: suppression, reappraisal or control). To test the main effect of request condition (Hypothesis 1a-b and 2), the analysis included each of the three condition groups: reappraisal (n=91), suppression (n=93) and control (n=45). For the testing of the three-way interaction hypotheses (3a to 4c) we excluded the control condition since these hypotheses were specific to comparing/contrasting the effects of suppression with reappraisal request.

### *Procedures*

The online survey included the informed consent form, demographics and a scale measuring explicit attitudes toward women managers. After completing the survey, participants signed up for the lab session. In order to assure confidentiality and to match their data from the online survey and the experiment, we asked the last five digits of our participants' national identification number in each phase of the data collection.

In a typical experimental session, upon their arrival to the lab participants were introduced to the study. Following the introduction participants were seated in front of a computer screen. Three to five participants attended each experimental session and were seated apart so it would be hard for them to observe each other. Each session followed the same three phase format: First, participant filled a self-report scale about their current emotional state to measure their felt anger

(time 1). Second, he/she took the implicit association test to measure their implicit attitudes towards female leadership. Finally, participants took part in an experiment with 2X3 design including a hypothetical scenario where we manipulated leader's gender (male vs. female) and leader's emotion regulation strategy request (reappraisal request; suppression request; no request/control).

Each participant received the tests in the same order. Although such fixed-order procedure includes potential limitations, such as order effects, our aim was to avoid the manipulations' affecting the IAT scores. Prior research (Bodenhausen, Mussweiler, Gabriel, & Moreno, 2001) suggests that anger increases reliance on group stereotypes in evaluating members of out-groups. We considered that if the scenario was presented prior to the IAT, anger in response to rejection by a male or female leader would increase the salience of gender-based leadership stereotypes and affect the IAT scores. Thus, we aimed to ensure that the IAT scores were not affected by the experimental manipulations and were suitable to be tested as a moderator.

The scenario described a situation in which participants were asked to put themselves in the place of an intern who was expecting a job offer but later declined by the leader of the company. This set up was used to create feelings of anger and irritability in the participants. Pilot testing suggested that participants would commonly feel these emotions after reading the scenario. The topic of internship was selected to increase the fidelity of the experiment, as the majority of participants had some experience as interns or part-timers. Pilot testing indicated that students could easily imagine themselves within the scenario. In addition to its realism for participants, we believe the scenario is relevant for leadership, since opportunities for doing leadership start when potential employees negotiate entry into the organization. Internships are now frequently utilized as a recruitment tool that decreases the chances of unmet expectations

(Moser, 2005) and their success depends partly on the relationship between the supervisor and the intern (Zhao & Liden, 2011).

*Leader gender manipulation.* We manipulated the gender of the leader by giving participants either information about a manager with a male name (i.e., *Ahmet*) or a female name (i.e., *Zeynep*). The names were selected from among the most prototypical Turkish names according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (2013). Participants were asked to put themselves in the place of a student intern and read the following scenario (ostensibly based on real life person and events) and later evaluated their attitudes toward the leader described in the scenario:

*“You are a senior student and have been an intern in a company for a year. Mr. Ahmet Parla (Ms. Zeynep Parla) has been the leader of your team during your internship. Mr. Ahmet Parla (Ms. Zeynep Parla) defines himself (herself) as follows: ‘I am a very decisive leader and set ambitious goals for my team members. I am also willing to support my team members by considering their needs.’”*

We purposefully tried to control for both task and relationship oriented leader characteristics for both genders in order to avoid a gender bias in the description of the leaders. In order to check that the manipulation of leader gender was not confounded with these characteristics, we asked participants to rate the extent to which the leader would behave as “a task-oriented leader if you worked with him (her)?” and “a person-oriented leader if you worked with him (her)?” One-way ANOVA tests indicated that leader gender manipulation was not related to these ratings (for task-orientation,  $F(1, 221) = .03, p = .94$ ; for relationship-orientation,  $F(1, 220) = .25, p = .62$ ).

*Emotion regulation request manipulation.* Subsequent to the manipulation of leader gender, all the participants read the following information about their internship experience:

*Throughout your internship you tried to show to Mr. Ahmet (Ms. Zeynep) how good an employee you are. You have made personal sacrifices for your team's achievement.*

*When you felt it was needed you have stayed late and spent money from your own pocket.*

*As the end of your internship approached you gained new skills and another intern started asking you for help on certain issues. This makes you feel good about yourself.*

*Mr. Ahmet (Ms. Zeynep) has implied clearly that you may get a job offer from this firm following your graduation. Indeed, you also believe that your performance was better than the other intern and you deserve a real job. Since you believe that this is going to be your dream job you did not really consider applying to other open positions. When your friends and family asked you why you are not searching for jobs you told them that a job was waiting for you. Your graduation is approaching and you are impatiently waiting the e-mail and the offer from Mr. Ahmet (Ms. Zeynep). This morning you woke up and found the following e-mail from him (her) in your inbox.*

This description was prepared with the aim of increasing participants' involvement and the fidelity of the scenario as well as arousing high expectations from the manager about the job offer and setting the stage for the delivery of bad news and the potential for anger. Participants then read the following e-mail in which the manager delivered the bad news and requested the use of either cognitive reappraisal or expression suppression emotion regulation strategy:

*Hello, I hope your last year as a senior went fine, congratulations for your graduation. I am writing you to let you know that I won't be offering you a position at this time.*

*Although your internship experience was positive, I had only one position opening and decided to consider another intern for that particular role. We still have our internship position available for the summer; however, I cannot promise that I will be able to offer*

*you a job afterwards.* (Cognitive reappraisal or Suppression request from the manager).

*Hope to see you again,*

Participants in the reappraisal request condition read the following sentence at the end of the email message: “*I understand this might be difficult for you, but I hope you consider what you have learned here and how you have professionally developed as an intern.*”<sup>1</sup> Participants in the suppression request condition instead read the following sentence at the end of the e-mail: “*I understand this might be difficult for you, but I expect that you put your emotions aside and act professionally.*” Participants in the no request/control condition only read “*I understand this might be difficult for you.*” at the end of their emails.

Upon reading the e-mail, participants were asked to write an e-mail in response to the e-mail they have just read. They were instructed to reveal their thoughts, ideas and their response to the internship offer from the manager in detail, assuming their e-mail will be read by the manager. After they wrote their e-mail, participants reported their current emotional state and rated their attitudes toward the leader. The whole procedure took about 25 minutes. Discussions during the debrief session suggested participants could not predict the hypotheses of the study.

### *Measures*

*Felt anger.* Participants’ felt anger before and after the experimental manipulations were measured with three items: *hostile*, *nervous* and *jittery*<sup>1</sup>, from the short version of negative affectivity scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). Participants filled the 20 item PANAS to rate their emotional state by considering to what extent they feel the given emotion at the moment using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “very slightly, or not at all” to 5 = “extremely”). PANAS was adapted to Turkish by Gençöz (2000). The Cronbach’s alpha reliability for time 1 and time 2 felt anger measures were .75 and .89, respectively. The lower reliability of the time 1

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<sup>1</sup> The Turkish translations of these items “sinirli” and “asabi” are synonymous with “annoyed” in English.

measure of felt anger is due to low level and variance of hostility among participants when they first showed up to the lab ( $M=1.07$ ,  $SD=.32$ ). High values indicated high felt anger.

*Expressed anger.* Teasing felt and displayed emotions apart is challenging. Structured observation, the most promising method, is difficult because emotions are displayed through a complex combination of facial expression, body language, spoken words, and tone of voice. Therefore, we preferred to evaluate the expressed anger of the participants by coding the anger in e-mails they have written to the manager. Each e-mail from the participant was coded by two raters. The raters were requested to assess the aggressiveness of the e-mail on the basis of 5 anger related words (angry, resentful, disgusted, scornful and hostile) based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Extremely*). The inter-rater reliabilities, measured by ICC, ranged from .70 (hostile) to .87 (angry). We calculated the expressed anger of each participant by averaging these 5 ratings. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the scale was .97.

*Attitudes toward the leader.* To evaluate the attitudes toward the leader before (time 1; measured before the reading of the e-mail) and after (time 2) the leader request for emotional regulation manipulation, we asked participants to rate three items on 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Very much”). The items asked participants to rate the extent to which they would want 1) to have him (her) as their leader; 2) closely work with him (her); as well as 3) like him (her) ( $\alpha = .88$ , for time 1 and .95 for time 2).

*Implicit attitudes toward female leadership.* In order to assess implicit attitudes toward female leadership, we developed an Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003) called the Gender-Leadership IAT to measure the strength of association between gender and leadership/followership attributes. IAT is a reaction time and sorting task in which participants respond to items that are classified into categories provided by the program (Inquisit). IAT measures response latencies of participants, which is assumed to show the

strength of cognitive association between a given attribute (leader vs. follower attributes) and a category (male vs. female). The lower the response latency for a given attribute-category classification the higher is the association between an attribute and a category.

To develop the Gender and Leadership IAT we conducted a pilot study with undergraduate students (N=37) where we asked participants to rate the prototypicality (typical vs. atypical) and valence (positive vs. negative) of 60 leadership and followership attributes in order to capture the most representative, familiar and emotionally neutral attributes of leader and follower for the undergraduate population (see, Dasgupta, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2003; Govan & Williams, 2004).

The analysis of the pilot data revealed the most 6 representative leadership items (i.e., encouraging, coordinator, inspiring, guider, foresighted, visionary) and followership items (i.e., submissive, team player, compliant, soft headed, collaborative, loyal) for IAT. For the female and male categories we used Turkish male and female names that were among the most commonly given to newborns in the study year (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013) (male names: Ahmet, Hasan, Murat, Emre, Ömer, Arda; female names Merve, Özlem, Fatma, Ayşe, Elif, Esra). Based on prior theory and research, we expected that participants would more quickly associate leadership items with male names and followership items with female names, than followership items with male names and leadership items with female names.

We used the D-score recommended by Greenwald and colleagues (2003) to measure implicit stereotypical attitudes toward female leadership. Higher scores in IAT test represent stereotypical attitudes (i.e., females are associated with followership and males with leadership) and lower scores represent anti-stereotypical attitudes towards female leadership (i.e. females are associated with leadership and males are associated with followership).

*Explicit attitudes toward women managers.* We measured participants' general attitudes toward female managers with Attitudes toward Women Managers Scale (ATWoM) developed by Aycan, Bayazit, Berkman and Boratav (2012) using Turkish samples. It consists of 27 items which are rated on 7 point agreement Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree") ( $\alpha = .83$ , in the current study). Higher scores indicate less stereotypical attitudes toward women leaders.

*Manipulation check.* To check the emotional regulation request manipulation, participants rated the extent (1 = "not at all" to 7 = "very much") to which they were asked by the leader a) "to consider your personal gains from the internship experience?" and b) "to suppress your emotions."

*Analysis.* To test the hypotheses, a series of ANCOVA was performed with leader gender and leader request condition (reappraisal, suppression or control) as independent variables, follower gender, felt anger (time 1) and attitudes toward the leader (time 1) as control variables, gender-leadership IAT score as covariate, and felt anger (time 2), expressed anger (time 2) and attitudes toward the leaders (time 2) as dependent variables. For hypotheses 1a, 1b and 2, we tested the main effect of condition. For hypotheses 3a, b and c, we tested the three-way interaction of leader gender, condition (excluding control) and gender-leadership IAT score for each outcome variable.

## **Results and Discussion**

*Manipulation check.* We performed a one-way ANOVA to test the effects of emotional request condition (suppression, reappraisal or control) on followers' perceptions of reappraisal and suppression request in the email that they have read. The main effect of request condition was significant for reappraisal manipulation check ratings,  $F(2, 218) = 14.21, p < .001$ . *Post hoc* pair wise comparison using a Tamhane test ( $\alpha = .05$ ) correcting for unequal variance showed that



reappraisal manipulation check ratings were significantly higher in the reappraisal condition ( $M=5.79$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ) than in the suppression ( $M=4.39$ ,  $SD=2.11$ ) and control ( $M=4.42$ ,  $SD=2.18$ ) conditions. The main effect of condition was significant for suppression manipulation check ratings,  $F(2, 218) = 4.35$ ,  $p < .05$ . *Post hoc* pair wise comparisons using an LSD test ( $\alpha = .05$ ) showed that the difference between the suppression ( $M=6.03$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ) and reappraisal condition ( $M=5.49$ ,  $SD=1.56$ ) was significant. A Tamhane test showed that the difference between suppression request condition and control condition ( $M=5.31$ ,  $SD=2.07$ ) was not significant. Additionally, leader gender was not significantly related to the manipulation check questions.

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations separately for variables collected before the manipulations and after the manipulations. As expected, male followers hold less favorable implicit and explicit attitudes than female followers toward female leadership. Consistent with the literature on implicit versus explicit attitudes these two types of attitudes towards female leadership were not significantly related.

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 Insert Table 1 about here  
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*Hypothesis testing.* For hypotheses 1a, 1b and 2, means, standard deviations and post-hoc significance tests ( $p < .05$ ) are displayed in Table 2. We indicate effect sizes ( $d$ ) for effects that are significant. Request condition had a significant main effect on felt anger (time 2),  $F(2, 218) = 4.89$ ,  $p < .01$ . Felt anger was significantly lower in the reappraisal request condition than in the control condition ( $d = .55$ ). The difference between reappraisal request and suppression request was not significant. The difference between suppression request and control condition was significant,  $d = .36$ . Controlling for time 1 felt anger and/or follower gender did not change the

effect of leader request condition on felt anger. These results partially support Hypothesis 1a: Reappraisal request lowered followers' felt anger relative to the control condition. However, reappraisal request was not more effective than suppression to lower felt anger. In fact, suppression was a better strategy than no strategy to lower felt anger.

Leader request condition had a significant main effect on expressed anger,  $F(2, 218) = 7.02, p < .01$ . Supporting Hypothesis 1b, participants expressed significantly less anger in the reappraisal request condition than in the suppression request condition ( $d = .35$ ) and the control condition ( $d = .55$ ).

The main effect of leader request condition on attitudes toward the leader (time 2) was not significant  $F(2, 214) = 2.57, p = .079$ . Attitudes toward the leaders in the reappraisal request condition were more favorable but not significantly different from the suppression request condition ( $d = .25$ ). The difference between the reappraisal condition and control condition was not significant. The difference between the suppression and control conditions was not significant. Thus, the results did not support hypothesis 2.

In sum, requesting the use of reappraisal strategy was more effective in helping followers' regulate their (a) felt anger relative to when there was no strategy request, and (b) expressed anger as opposed to suppression request strategy or not requesting a strategy. However, there was no evidence that these strategies would affect attitudes toward the leaders.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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The analysis testing the three-way interactions did not support Hypothesis 3a and b: The interaction of leader request condition, follower's implicit attitudes toward female leadership and

leader gender predicting felt and expressed anger was not significant. Supporting Hypothesis 3c, the interaction of the leader gender, leader request condition and implicit attitudes toward female leadership was significant for attitudes toward the leader at time 2 (Table 3).

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Insert Table 3 about here  
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We used a three dimensional graph (Figure 1) and probed the interaction for Hypothesis 3c using slope difference tests (Dawson & Richter, 2006) and simple slope tests (Aiken & West, 1991). Significance tests are reported at one standard deviation below or above the mean of the moderators. Otherwise we report values of the moderators at which the tests become significant as suggest by Preacher, Curran and Bauer (2006). To obtain effect sizes (*d*), we used dichotomous variables based on the median split of the centered continuous variables and we computed degrees of freedom for each simple slope test. Although this method may result in the overestimation effect sizes, it allows comparing the effect sizes between main and interaction effects. The results indicate that followers with highly stereotypical attitudes toward female leaders were not affected by the leader request' for reappraisal or suppression strategy. For male leaders, the relationship between condition and attitudes toward the leader at time 2 was negative for stereotypical (Figure 2, line 3) and anti-stereotypical followers (Figure 2, line 4) ,  $t=2.02$ ,  $p<.05$ . Followers with stereotypical attitudes had more positive attitudes toward male leaders in the suppression request condition; in contrast, anti-stereotypical implicit attitudes indicated the reverse. Supporting hypothesis 4c, when suppression was requested, followers with highly stereotypical attitudes had more positive attitudes toward male leaders than toward female leaders,  $\beta=.79$ ,  $t=2.17$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $d = .67$ . The individual slopes were not significant.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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Additionally, using explicit attitudes toward female leadership (ATWOM) measure as dependent variable did not show any significant findings, supporting our expectation that implicit attitudes are more influential when individuals are attempting to suppress their stereotypes as well as emotions.

In summary, the findings of Study 1 suggest that leaders' request for reappraisal as an emotion regulation strategy was superior to a suppression strategy. Reappraisal strategy not only seem to be effective in lowering feelings of anger compared to requesting no strategy but also helped followers regulate their anger expressions in their e-mail communication with their leaders. These results were qualified by the interaction of leader gender and follower implicit attitudes toward female leadership.

One question these findings raise is that whether or not the anger expressed in these e-mails due to leaders' emotion regulation requests would in turn negatively influence how the leaders view the followers. If the answer is yes, this would suggest that emotion suppression requests backfire and create a vicious cycle of mutual animosity between a leader and follower. Furthermore, such expressions of anger might be perceived differently when it comes from male vs. female followers because of stereotypical views of females expressing their anger. To test these possibilities we conducted a second study using the e-mails written by the participants in Study 1 as stimulus materials.

## **Study 2**

Study 1 focused on followers' expressed anger in an e-mail written to the leader and followers' attitudes toward the leader in response to a rejection by the leader. We found that followers expressed more anger when the leaders requested suppression as opposed to

reappraisal. Study 2 explores how anger expressed by the followers in their e-mails in Study 1 in suppression or reappraisal request condition affects leaders' attitudes toward the followers. Study 2 specifically explores hypotheses 4a to 5.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Thirty-two (16 females, 16 males) Turkish managers working for various private companies in and around Istanbul operating in a variety of industries including banking, energy, FMCG, IT and automotive parts, participated in Study 2. Participants were recruited from the Executive MBA program of a university in Istanbul. The average age of the participants were 34 (28-50 years).

### *Procedures*

Each participant received a booklet containing an invitation to the survey and the description of the study followed by eight e-mails written by participants (the followers) in Study 1 in response to their rejection they received. Prior to reading the e-mails, managers were requested to read the following scenario.

*Imagine that your company was using internships to recruit entry level employees. Last summer all interns did quite well. Originally you intended to open several positions in the company and offer them to the most successful interns. However, due to the economic crisis, you could offer a job to one intern only. You delivered the bad news to the rest of the interns via an e-mail, explaining that you were not able to offer a position to them at this time. Today you opened your e-mail box and found that eight of the interns responded back to you.*

Participants then were asked to read the e-mails one-by-one and respond to five questions following each e-mail. Four of the questions asked the managers to indicate their attitudes

toward the intern writing the e-mail. The final question asked managers to rate the intensity of anger they perceive in the e-mail. The managers read and evaluated the e-mails individually and submitted the completed surveys online or in a hard copy format.

*E-mail selection criteria.* Thirty-two of the e-mails written by the participants in Study 1 were selected to be used in Study 2. Each selected e-mail corresponded with one of 16 cells based on a 2X2X2X2 matrix including follower gender (male or female), leader gender (male or female), leader request condition (suppression or reappraisal) and level of expressed anger (low or high).<sup>2</sup>

*Experimental design.* We used a cross-classified experimental design where 256 ratings were nested in 32 managers and 32 emails. For this, the 32 e-mails were divided into four sets of eight. Two of these sets included emails that were written to a male leader and the other two sets included emails that were written to a female leader in Study 1. Male managers received one of the former sets and female managers received one of the latter sets. Each manager therefore read and evaluated eight emails in a random order.

The design of Study 2 included three additional procedures. First, the managers were blind to the leader request condition (suppression or reappraisal) used in Study 1. This ensured that the leader request condition would not be directly related with their evaluations of the e-mails. Second, participants received no suggestion whether the e-mails were categorized as containing “high” or “low” anger and therefore were blind to the anger manipulation. Third, the participants learned the follower’s gender indicated by the follower’s signature at the end of each e-mail. The original names of students from Study 1 were replaced by typical Turkish names

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<sup>2</sup> In Study 1 expressed anger in the e-mails was positively skewed (.66) with a median of 2.00 and a range of 3.75 (1.00-4.75). Based on these values, in Study 2, expressed anger was used as a dichotomous variable. Low anger corresponded with scores below 1.75 (43.5% of all cases) and high anger with scores above 3.50 (11% of all cases). For Study 2, 16-16 e-mails representing these two categories of expressed anger were randomly selected.

(four male, four female). The e-mails were also edited to correct for obvious grammatical errors and punctuation. These procedures allowed investigating the attitudes of male and female managers toward male and female followers in light of emotion regulation strategy condition that preceded the e-mails and followers' expressed anger in the e-mails.

### *Measures*

*Attitudes toward the follower.* The attitude measure consisted of four items that assessed the extent to which managers would want to interact with the particular intern in the future. The managers answered these questions using a 7-point Likert scale. The items were: "If you hired this intern as an employee, (1) "to what extent do you believe he/she could adapt to the professional job environment?" (1 = "no fit at all" to 7= "very good fit"); (2) how would you predict the quality of relationship between you and him/her?" (1= "very bad" to 7="very good") (3) "If there was an open job position in your company, would you recommend this person for that position?" (1= "absolutely no" to 7="absolutely yes"); (4) "Suppose that the intern you made a job offer rejected your offer. If the person writing this e-mail was your second choice, when you consider what is written in this e-mail, would you make a job offer to this person?" (1 = "absolutely no" to 7 = "absolutely yes"). The four items formed a highly reliable scale ( $\alpha=.97$ ). High scores indicated favorable attitudes toward the follower.

*Perceived anger.* Perceived anger was measured by a single question using a 7-point Likert scale on which the managers rated the level of anger they perceived in the e-mails from 1 (*No anger at all*) to 7 (*lots of anger*). We considered a single item measure adequate for our aims since we were interested in these managers' spontaneous reactions to the email they have read. We also believe that since these managers are frequent users of email it would be easy for them to judge the anger in one. Higher scores indicated high level of anger.

## **Results and Discussion**

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations. As expected, attitudes toward the followers were more positive when their e-mail was written in response to a reappraisal request than to a suppression request. As expected, expressed anger (low or high level) positively correlated with perceived anger, suggesting that the managers perceived that the e-mails categorized as “high anger” contained more anger than the e-mails categorized as “low anger.” Finally, as expected, high level of expressed anger was associated with negative attitudes toward the follower ( $r = .74, p < .001$ ).

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 Insert Table 4 about here  
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*Hypothesis testing.* A cross classified random effects or mixed-model analysis was performed to test the main effects of manager gender, follower gender, leader request condition and expressed anger on attitudes toward the follower using e-mail word count as a covariate (Goldstein, 1994). The analysis accounts for the nested nature of 256 ratings under 32 managers and 32 emails as well as the random variance in attitudes toward the followers explained by differences between e-mails (stimulus variance) and differences between managers (rater variance). To maintain statistical power, we did not include the stimulus-rater interaction. Word count did not have a significant effect. The main effects of manager gender and follower gender were not significant. Supporting Hypothesis 4a, condition significantly predicted attitudes toward the followers,  $F(1, 25.82) = 4.31, p < .05$ . Attitudes were less favorable in the suppression request condition ( $M = 3.54, SD = 1.92$ ) than in the reappraisal condition ( $M = 4.33, SD = 1.88$ ). As expected, expressed anger had a significant main effect,  $F(1, 25.81) = 28.66, p < .001$ , attitudes toward the followers were more positive when anger was low ( $M = 4.94, SD = 1.74$ ) compared to when anger was high ( $M = 2.92, SD = 1.57$ ).



The results also supported Hypothesis 4b. Request condition had a significant main effect on perceived anger in the e-mails,  $F(1, 25.50) = 5.33, p < .05$ . When entered simultaneously, perceived anger as a covariate had a highly significant main effect on attitudes toward the followers,  $F(1, 178.96) = 136.44, p < .001$ , while the main effect of request condition was no longer significant. The more anger the participants (managers) perceived in the e-mails, the less positive attitudes they had toward the followers,  $\beta = -.52, t = 11.68, p < .001$ .

The results did not support Hypothesis 5. The interaction between expressed anger and follower gender on attitudes toward the follower was not significant. Thus, female followers who expressed anger were not rated differently from male followers expressing anger.

In sum, these results suggest that the ineffectiveness of leaders' requests to suppress negative emotions and act professionally come back full circle to them and provoke their negative attitudes toward the followers. Furthermore, the non-significant interaction test suggests that the normative expectations about display rules in hierarchical relationships dominate the gender stereotypical expectations about the expression of anger. Leaders frown upon expressions of anger from a low status follower regardless of the gender of that follower.

### **General Discussion**

In two studies we examined the effects of leaders' requests from followers to regulate their negative emotions using emotional display rules on followers' success in regulating their anger and on attitudes of leaders and followers towards each other. In Study 1 we found that leaders' who requested their followers to use cognitive reappraisal as opposed to expression suppression were more successful in lightening the blow of the bad news. Reappraisal requests, relative to both suppression requests and no emotion regulation request also led followers to hold off expressing their anger in response to bad news. These results are consistent with Geddes and Callister's (2007) dual threshold model which suggested that socially appropriate emotion

management (e.g., cognitively refocusing) would help angry individuals to substitute their initial impulses with socially desirable responses and either silence their felt anger or remain between the expression and impropriety thresholds.

Our findings supported the hypothesis that proposed leaders' gender and followers' stereotypical attitudes towards women's leadership would moderate the relationship between the requested strategy and attitudes toward the leader. Followers who implicitly associated leadership with male gender evaluated female leaders less favorably regardless of the emotion regulation strategy requested. On the other hand, the same followers with stereotypical attitudes, consistent with masculine stereotypes, preferred male leaders who requested them to suppress (vs. to reappraise) their negative emotions. Interestingly, the preferences of followers who held anti-stereotypical implicit attitudes towards women's leadership were opposite in direction for male leaders. That is, these followers, in contrast to followers with stereotypical attitudes, preferred male leaders who asked for reappraisal more than suppression. Finally, those followers who held anti-stereotypical attitudes reacted to female leaders similar to how followers holding stereotypical attitudes reacted to male leaders. These findings held up only when attitudes towards women's leadership were measured implicitly confirming that explicit attitude measures have less predictive value than implicit measures in socially sensitive situations.

Leader gender, follower implicit prejudice and request condition interaction did not predict felt and expressed anger. Previous research indicated that the interpersonal effects of discrete emotions depend on the target (event vs. person) of those emotions (Lelieveld, Van Dijk, Van Beest, Steinel, & Van Kleef, 2011). It is possible that followers felt and expressed anger both towards the bad news and towards the leader delivering the news. Since our felt-anger scale measured how participants felt after reading about the news in general and it was difficult to tease out expressed anger towards the leader vs. the bad news from the emails, our implicit prejudice

measure might have trouble predicting these outcomes. In contrast, the attitude measure we used specifically asked participants to directly rate the leader delivering the e-mail message, which might have created a better opportunity for implicit prejudice toward female leadership to predict participants' responses. It is also possible that non-normality in felt and expressed anger measures made it hard to find significant three-way interaction effects.

Study 1 examined the affective and cognitive reactions of followers upon receiving bad news from the leader. Study 2, on the other hand, examined the leaders' cognitive reactions towards the followers' responses to the bad news. Leaders' reactions were more negative for those followers who responded to a leader's request to use suppression. Findings of both studies complement each other and show that requests from followers to deal with their anger using suppression generally backfires. Interestingly, suppression requests did not have the same negative impact when it came from a male leader and was made to a follower who implicitly associated leadership with being male. On the other hand, we did not observe any gender biases with respect to leaders' evaluations of followers. Perhaps such bias is only prevalent for those managers who are implicitly prejudiced against females. Unfortunately in Study 2 we were not able to collect data on individual differences in implicit attitudes.

#### *Implications for Theory and Practice*

The present study is first in examining leaders' specific behavioral attempts to manage their followers' success in emotion regulation. Although recent studies indicated that leader-facilitated emotion regulation decreased job strain and increased problem solving ability (Thiel et al, 2012; in press) they did not examine effects on followers felt and expressed emotions. By examining followers' felt and expressed anger in response to emotion regulation requests of leaders, we were able extend the dual-threshold model of anger (Geddes & Callister's, 2007). Specifically we showed that requests of reappraisal strategy was more effective than a

suppression strategy or no strategy in down regulating felt and expressed anger, leading individuals to keep their anger silent or completely eliminating their negative emotional state.

The fact that we found variance in followers' success in emotion regulation in response to bad news delivered by their leaders have implications for leader-follower relationships and how leaders actually deliver bad news. If leaders want to continue their professional relationship with their followers and be perceived positively by them, it is important that they use strategies that take into account followers' emotions and help them find ways to refocus their thoughts and reevaluate their feelings. Leaders asking their followers to suppress their negative emotions might have been perceived as inauthentic and not high in empathy (Gardner et al., 2009). Recent research by Thiel and colleagues (in press) suggests that leaders can couple their suppression requests by words of empathy (i.e., person-focused emotion management strategy) to be more effective in buffering followers' work stress from negative events. We suggest that leaders can also request reappraisal to increase their effectiveness. Future research can compare reappraisal requests with suppression requests coupled with words of empathy.

The present findings have implications not only for the literature on followers' success in regulating emotions, but also for leaders' choice of emotion regulation strategy while managing follower emotions. Our results are consistent with theory and research in the area of gender and leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and show that female leaders are penalized when they act in a masculine fashion (e.g., ask for suppression of negative feelings) towards followers who hold implicitly stereotypical attitudes towards women leaders. We have shown that although reappraisal should be the preferred strategy relative to suppression in terms of managing anger, reappraisal strategy was not superior to suppression when it came to the attitudes of prejudiced followers towards female leaders. These results suggest that female leaders are between a hard place and a rock when operating in masculine industries with followers who are likely to hold

stereotypical attitudes about their leadership. Although they would be better off shying away from asking followers to suppress emotions and act professionally it is not clear if asking for reappraisal helps them engender positive attitudes in the eyes of their followers. Still, female leaders should be cognizant of their followers' stereotypical attitudes towards their leadership. Unfortunately, this presents a particular challenge for them, as even the followers themselves may not be aware of their own unconscious prejudices.

The present research also has implications for how leaders should pick their words carefully, especially when they communicate emotionally sensitive messages through electronic means and when their words have stereotypic connotations. Our manipulation of emotion regulation strategy request involved only a few but apparently powerful words. The request to "act professionally" seems to have important repercussions for leaders, especially women leaders. Such language used to provide bad news to individuals such as interns may not be as meaningful, since these newcomers have yet to learn the emotion scripts commonly used in professional settings. These words seem to take on a power of their own when they are used to communicate with individuals who don't have the same cognitive structures as those seasoned employees, subsequently engendering anger in the recipients.

#### *Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research*

The present study used undergraduate students as participants which probably limits the generalizability of the findings to real employees. However, we used an internship scenario and tried to increase the fidelity of our manipulations for our participants. We believe our results would successfully generalize to student intern populations who are looking for jobs. Future research can try to replicate these findings in the field.

We used a scenario study and manipulated leader gender with names and leader request for emotion regulation strategy use with one sentence. These manipulations can be considered

weak but we were able to find support for most of our hypotheses. It is important that future research use different types of scenarios and examine the effects of leader requests on the expressions of other discrete emotions such as disappointment or jealousy.

Studying leader-follower relations in the lab using a hypothetical scenario has its limitations, as actual relationships involve real people and context. Thus, our findings may not generalize for actual leader-follower relationships. We used an experimental design to try to isolate the role of leader gender and emotional regulation request strategy on followers' anger (felt and expressed) and attitudes toward the leader. Future research could examine the implications of our findings for long-term, established leader-follower relations. Otherwise, a more powerful design employing face-to-face or virtual interactions (see, Thiel et al., 2012, for an example of the latter) can also be used to increase the fidelity of manipulations.

Our study was conducted in Turkey. Recent studies find that the norms surrounding suppression as an emotion regulation strategy and its consequences for social relations may be culture specific (e.g., Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007; Matsumoto, Yoo, Nacagawa, & 37 members 2008). Although the present study was conducted in Turkey, our results suggest that requesting suppression has a potentially negative effect on leader-follower relationship, similar to what have been suggested in the North American literature. Future research can replicate these findings in East Asian cultures where suppression is more likely to be used and accepted as a strategy to regulate negative emotions.

We studied felt and expressed anger following bad news delivered by the leader. It is possible that these emotions were not just directed towards the leader but to another target such as the company or the news itself (Lelieveld et al., 2011). In addition, participants might have felt other discrete emotions in addition to anger. Therefore, we recommend future research on the management of emotions to focus on multiple targets and multiple emotions.

Although we attempted to collect data from both males and females, to control for participant gender effects in Study 1 and test a hypothesis in Study 2, future research can test other hypotheses involving follower gender. Follower gender significantly predicted anger expressions in emails with males acting out more than females. Past studies showed that males are better in suppressing their emotions whereas females are more expressive (e.g., Gross & John, 2003). Furthermore, males differ from females in terms of their implicit and explicit attitudes toward female leadership (see, Table 1), and preference for female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Such differences should be further examined for their main effects on success in emotion regulation as well as with respect to how they moderate the effects found in the present study.

### *Conclusion*

In two experimental studies we showed that leaders might better assist their followers regulate their feelings of anger following bad news if they facilitate the use of reappraisal strategy. The knowledge of what such emotion regulation strategies entail, how they can be used and to what effect are important in the process of emotional competency may contribute to the development of both leaders and followers. The present study attempted to contribute to this knowledge base.

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Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

<i>Pre-test measures</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5
1. Follower gender <sup>a</sup>	.62	.49	.32**	-.20**	.07	.02
2. ATWOM <sup>b</sup>	4.52	.64		-.12	-.09	-.15*
3. Gender-Leadership IAT score <sup>c</sup>	.11	.31			-.08	-.05
4. Attitudes toward leader(time 1) <sup>d</sup>	5.34	1.14				-.02
5. Felt anger (time 1) <sup>e</sup>	1.33	.57				-
<i>Post-test measures</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3		
1. Attitudes toward leader (time 2) <sup>d</sup>	3.10	1.75	-.39**	-.40**		
2. Felt anger (time 2) <sup>e</sup>	2.04	1.04		.32**		
3. Expressed anger <sup>e</sup>	1.58	1.01			-	

*Note:* N=213 for Pre-test and N=221 for Post-test measures.

Correlations are based on listwise deletion.

<sup>a</sup> For follower gender and leader gender, 0=males, 1=females.

<sup>b</sup> ATWOM: Attitudes toward women managers scale (High scores indicate positive attitudes).

<sup>c</sup> Gender-Leadership IAT: High scores indicate implicit prejudice toward female leadership.

<sup>d</sup> Attitudes toward the leader (time 1) and (time 2) are assessed on a 7-point scale.

<sup>e</sup> Felt anger (time 1), felt anger (time 2) and expressed anger are assessed on a 5-point scale.

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

Table 2

*Leader Request Condition Main Effects on Felt Anger, Expressed Anger and Attitudes toward the Leader (time 2)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Reappraisal request</i>		<i>Suppression request</i>		<i>Control</i>	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
<i>Felt anger</i>	1.82 <sup>a</sup>	.96	2.03 <sup>ab</sup>	.93	2.41 <sup>b</sup>	1.27
<i>Expressed anger</i>	1.31 <sup>a</sup>	.67	1.61 <sup>b</sup>	1.03	1.99 <sup>b</sup>	1.28
<i>Attitudes toward the leader</i>	3.42 <sup>a</sup>	1.60	3.02 <sup>a</sup>	1.60	2.67 <sup>a</sup>	1.80

*Note:* Letter shared among groups indicates no significant difference. Post hoc pair wise tests were performed using LSD or Tahmane tests in accord with variance assumptions.

Table 3

*Attitudes toward the Leader (time 2) by Leader Gender, Leader Request Condition and Gender-Leadership IAT Score*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Means squared</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i><math>\eta^2</math></i>
Expressed anger (time 1)	54.84	1	54.84	26.29	.00	.14
Leader gender	2.03	1	2.03	.97	.33	.01
Follower gender	6.71	1	6.71	3.21	.08	.02
Leader request condition (Condition)	.01	1	.01	.01	.97	.00
Attitudes towards the leader (time 1)	41.90	1	41.90	20.08	.00	.11
Gender-Leadership IAT score (IAT)	.69	1	.69	.33	.57	.00
Leader gender X Condition	2.00	1	2.00	.96	.33	.01
Condition X IAT	1.59	1	1.59	.76	.39	.01
Leader gender X IAT	4.63	1	4.63	2.22	.14	.02
Follower gender X IAT	13.39	1	13.39	6.42	.01	.04
Leader gender X Condition X IAT	9.31	1	9.31	4.46	.04	.03
Error	337.69	162	2.09			

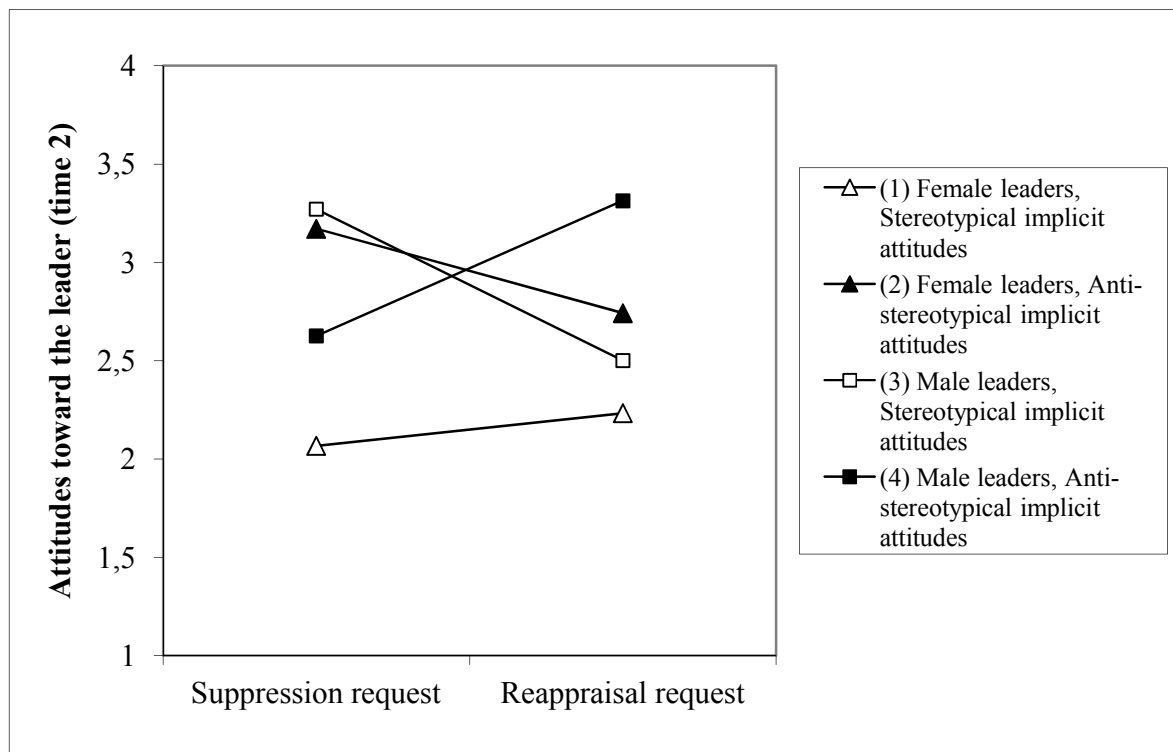


Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Attitudes toward the Followers and Perceived Anger and their Correlations with the Independent Variables*

Variables	Attitudes toward follower (M=3.93, SD=1.97)	Perceived anger (M=4.38, SD=2.28)
1. Manager gender	-.08	.02
2. Follower gender	.08	-.04
3. Leader request condition	.21**	-.22**
4. Expressed anger	-.52**	.56**

\*\* p < .01



*Figure 1.* Interactive effects of leader gender, implicit attitudes toward female leadership (stereotypical versus anti-stereotypical) and reappraisal vs. suppression request condition on attitudes toward the leader (time 2). Attitudes toward the leader scale ranges from 1 (*unfavourable attitudes*) to 7 (*favourable attitudes*).

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<sup>i</sup> Thiel and colleagues (2013) have shown leader's empathy is an important person-focused emotion regulation strategy that is different than emotion-focused strategies of suppression and reappraisal. Indeed, one cannot request an emotion-focused strategy to be used without acknowledging that the person feels those emotions. Therefore, we included a moderate level of leader empathy ("*I understand this might be difficult for you...*"), in the same sentence where we manipulated suppression and reappraisal request.