

Is Beauty Beastly?

Gender-Specific Effects of Leader Attractiveness and Leadership Style on Followers' Trust and Loyalty

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Abstract. While attractiveness has many positive effects in everyday life, it has been shown to negatively affect selection of female leaders, the so-called “beauty is beastly” effect. Yet, an impact on more profound variables, such as followers’ trust in and loyalty toward female leaders, remains unclear, as does its interaction with different leadership styles: transformational (characterized by charismatic behavior aimed at inspiring and motivating followers) versus transactional (characterized by a strong focus on task completion and respective rewards or punishments). We have therefore made the first empirical attempt to test the interaction effects of leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style on followers’ trust and loyalty. Results from a laboratory experiment provide clear empirical support for the negative effects of attractiveness for female (but not male) leaders with a transformational leadership style. Attractiveness did not influence trust and loyalty toward male and female leaders with a transactional leadership style. The negative influence of leader attractiveness on trust and loyalty toward female transformational leaders was mediated by ascribed leader communion.

Keywords: attractiveness, communion, gender stereotypes, transformational leadership

Even though the number of women in leadership positions has increased continuously within the last 15 years, women are still faced with considerable barriers when attempting to reach positions in middle and top management (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). This is noteworthy in particular since earlier research has demonstrated that women and men holding leadership positions are equally effective (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995) and that women even engage in more effective leadership behavior as compared to their male colleagues (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003).

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is a topic of ongoing relevance (Eagly & Carli, 2003b). In 1983, Heilman discussed the lack of fit between the female gender role and the leadership role which potentially hinders the success of women in organizations: The female gender stereotype is characterized by communal attributes. The male gender stereotype on the other hand consists of agentic characteristics. Specifically, agency has been described in terms of “task functioning and goal achievement” (Wojciszke & Abele, 2008, p. 1139), comprising attributes like being dominant, aggressive, and independent. In contrast, communion refers to “functioning in social relations” (Wojciszke & Abele, 2008, p. 1139), comprising attributes like being sensitive, helpful, and concerned about others. Moreover, recent research has provided important insights into the relative dominance of inferences based on communion over agency in social judgment (Abele & Bruckmüller, 2011; Wojciszke & Abele, 2008).

Based on the differentiation between agency and communion, the lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983, 2001) proposes that personnel decisions are often biased against

women since the female gender stereotype is less concordant with the managerial stereotype than the male gender stereotype. In this regard, the “beauty is beastly” effect (Heilman & Saruwatari, 1979; Heilman & Stopeck, 1985) has revealed negative consequences of attractiveness for women when they apply for leadership positions, suggesting that stereotypical evaluations of females are elicited particularly by mere appearance, resulting in a greater lack of fit between leader and gender role. With regard to the question what factors might influence whether women can overcome the perceived lack of fit between female gender role and leader role, a transformational leadership style has been proposed (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

However, previous research has not investigated leadership style in relation to the “beauty is beastly” effect. Furthermore, the impact of the “beauty is beastly” effect on outcomes beyond personnel selection has not been examined so far. One type of outcome that is particularly important for a leader’s success and therefore lends itself to investigation in this context is followers’ trust and loyalty (Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Finally, literature on the “beauty is beastly” effect has not yet revealed the mechanisms that mediate this effect. One variable that is particularly likely to function as a mediator is perceived leader communion (Abele, Uchrowski, Suitner, & Wojciszke, 2008; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007) because theory suggests that devaluations of attractive female leaders result from exaggerated perceptions of communal attributes (Heilman & Saruwatari, 1979).

Thus, the present research was designed to enable a broader understanding of gender-specific effects of leader

attractiveness by (1) extending the investigation to particularly relevant outcomes beyond personnel decisions such as followers' trust and loyalty, (2) including leadership style as a potential moderator, and (3) examining a mediated moderation by perceived leader communion. Note that we pay particular attention to the followers' perspective (i.e., their trust and loyalty toward the leader) because this aspect has been stressed as crucial in recent research and theorizing on leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2011) in order to allow for a more balanced approach to "leadership as a complex and socially constructed phenomenon involving not only leaders, but also followers and the contexts in which leaders and followers interact" (Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2011, p. 1062).

Gender Stereotypes and Attractiveness

The negative consequences female – but not male – leaders are faced with have been documented in a number of contexts. For example, physical attractiveness has been found to have positive effects on a number of job-related outcomes and has been regarded as "always an asset for individuals" (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003, p. 451). For women, however, high attractiveness is not necessarily beneficial. Experimental research has demonstrated that female as compared to male leaders are devaluated regarding their performance (Heilman & Stopeck, 1985), leadership competence (Sczesny, Spremann, & Stahlberg, 2006), and hireability (Johnson, Podratz, Dipboye, & Gibbons, 2010) when they were highly attractive. The underlying explanation of these negative effects based on the lack of fit model is that attractiveness fuels femininity perceptions and thereby increases the perceived lack of fit between female gender role and leader role.

In early experimental research by Heilman and Stopeck (1985), study participants evaluated performance reviews of employees varying by position (managerial vs. clerical), appearance (attractive vs. unattractive), and gender (male vs. female). Attractiveness had no effects on performance evaluations of men independent of their position. For women, attractiveness was only beneficial when their position was nonmanagerial. In contrast, for women applying for managerial positions, high attractiveness had negative consequences. The finding that high levels of attractiveness can be disadvantageous for women in leadership positions has recently been reanalyzed by Johnson and colleagues (2010) who observed negative effects of attractiveness for women who applied for typically masculine positions for which physical appearance was irrelevant.

Yet, as introduced above, it remains unclear what implications result from the "beauty is beastly" effect beyond the selection for a leadership position. In order to be effective when holding a leadership position, leaders must establish strong trusting and loyal relationships with their followers (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Chen et al., 2002; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Jung, Yammarino, & Lee, 2009) because trust in the leader further affects organizational outcome variables like followers' organizational citizenship behavior (Pillai,

Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999) or in-role performance (Casimir, Waldman, Bartran, & Yang, 2006). Similar to the relevance of trust in one's leader, empirical research revealed the importance of followers' loyalty (Chen et al., 2002). Loyalty goes one step beyond trust in one's leader because it comprises supportive behavior. Followers' loyalty is a consequence of a leadership style that fosters followers' identification with, and solidarity to the leader. Empirical evidence suggests that followers' loyalty toward their leader is a strong and positive predictor of in-role as well as extra-role performance, above and beyond the impact of related constructs (e.g., organizational commitment; Chen et al., 2002). Hence, due to their enormous importance for a leader's success, we focus on followers' trust and loyalty in our investigation of the "beauty is beastly" effect.

Transformational Leadership Style

Beyond gender and attractiveness stereotypes, leadership style plays a crucial role for the evaluation of female leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2003a; Eagly et al., 2003; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008). In particular, transformational leadership style has been discussed as a moderator of gender-stereotypical devaluations of female as compared to male leaders due to its assumed consistency with the female gender role (Eagly, 2003; Yoder, 2001).

The transformational leadership style is based on four dimensions (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996): (1) stimulating critical and innovative thinking processes in followers (intellectual stimulation), (2) motivating followers to contribute to a shared vision (inspirational motivation), (3) taking care of followers' needs, interests, concerns, and supporting their personal growth (individualized consideration), and (4) serving as a role model by acting in accordance with one's own values and beliefs (idealized influence). Transformational leadership has been contrasted with transactional leadership, which is characterized by a strong focus on task completion and respective rewards or punishments (i.e., contingent reward, management by exception active and passive). In contrast to transactional leaders, transformational leaders inspire their followers to reach goals beyond those originally expected of them. Therefore, a transformational leadership style exerts positive influence on manifold organizational outcome variables (Judge & Piccolo, 2004) like job satisfaction (Podsakoff et al., 1996), commitment (Arnold, Barling, & Kelloway, 2001), work engagement (Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2009), individual performance (Goody, Gavin, Johnson, Frazier, & Snow, 2009), team performance (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007), and organizational performance (Peus, Kerschreiter, Frey, & Traut-Mattausch, 2010).

Transformational leadership is currently the most dominant approach in leadership literature (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Judge, Woolf, Hurst, & Livingston, 2006). As compared to earlier research on democratic versus autocratic or participative versus directive leadership that was popular prior to 1990, this contemporary string of research provides

more exhaustive descriptions of leader behavior (Eagly et al., 2003), and thereby contributes to an in-depth understanding of leadership and its impact on gender-specific leader evaluations.

Moreover, the question has been posed whether displaying a transformational leadership style is a viable solution to overcome the double bind that women in leadership positions are faced with (Eagly, 2003). In a meta-analysis of 45 primary studies, Eagly et al. (2003) found that female leaders were perceived as more transformational than their male counterparts. Based on these results, Eagly and Carli (2003b) claim a small advantage of female over male leaders, however, at the same time also a disadvantage based on gender-stereotypical evaluations. Whether the “aggregate result of advantage plus disadvantage can be advantage, disadvantage, or no difference” depends on additional factors (Eagly & Carli, 2003b, p. 852). To summarize, the discussion of female leadership advantage and disadvantage – especially with regard to the role of transformational leadership – is left with contradictions that have not fully been solved to date (Eagly, 2007).

In our investigation of the “beauty is beastly” effect we question if transformational leadership can in fact alleviate the negative effect of attractiveness for female leaders. To the contrary, we argue that since transformational leaders engage in inspiring, motivating, and overall clearly more charismatic behavior as compared to transactional leaders, this style strengthens the perceived lack of fit of attractive women to their leadership role. That is, if a female leader is perceived as particularly attractive, a transformational leadership style can result in a backlash: high attractiveness strengthens perceptions of femininity, which in turn collide with the influential style of a transformational leader (Vinkenburgh, Van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). Thus, we expect the interaction of leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style to predict important follower attitudes such as trust and loyalty. We hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: Leadership style interacts with leader gender and attractiveness to predict followers’ trust in their leader. When displaying a transformational leadership style, attractive female leaders elicit lower levels of followers’ trust than unattractive female leaders. This devaluation effect does not occur in case of transactional leadership.

Hypothesis 1b: Leadership style interacts with leader gender and attractiveness to predict followers’ loyalty toward their leader. When displaying a transformational leadership style, attractive female leaders elicit lower levels of followers’ loyalty than unattractive female leaders. This devaluation effect does not occur in case of transactional leadership.

Leader Communion

Previous research on the “beauty is beastly” effect does not only suffer from a lack of insights into more profound outcome variables. It also remains unclear how the

interaction of leader gender and leader attractiveness influences respective outcomes. Theoretically, it has been assumed that devaluations are based on exaggerated perceptions of gender-related attributes (Heilman & Saruwatari, 1979), such as pronounced communion or reduced agency. Concordantly, we argue that high attractiveness strengthens perceptions of feminine attributes, which in turn collide with the influential style of a transformational leader (Vinkenburgh et al., 2011).

Based on the preferential processing hypothesis of communal characteristics in social judgment (Abele & Bruckmüller, 2011; Wojciszke & Abele, 2008), we focus on followers’ ascriptions of communion to their leader as a mediator. Earlier research on the mediating effects of an “implied communality deficit” (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007, p. 81) strengthens this view. Communion perceptions are related to one’s social attraction toward a person, as, for instance, liking (Wojciszke, Abele, & Baryla, 2009). Therefore, if followers ascribe a lack of communion to the attractive female leader, they will be prone to reduce their trust and loyalty toward her. That is, an attractive as compared to an unattractive female leader with a transformational leadership style should be devalued in terms of her relational qualities, her communion. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2a: Ascribed leader communion mediates the effect of the interaction of leader gender and leader attractiveness to predict followers’ trust in transformational leaders. Attractive female leaders with a transformational leadership style are ascribed lower levels of communion as compared to unattractive female leaders and male leaders with a transformational leadership style. Communion ratings, in turn, positively predict followers’ trust.

Hypothesis 2b: Ascribed leader communion mediates the effect of the interaction of leader gender and leader attractiveness to predict followers’ loyalty toward transformational leaders. Attractive female leaders with a transformational leadership style are ascribed lower levels of communion as compared to unattractive female leaders and male leaders with a transformational leadership style. Communion ratings, in turn, positively predict followers’ loyalty.

Method

The study was designed to test the hypotheses described above on gender-specific effects of leader attractiveness and leadership style on followers’ trust and loyalty toward their leader (Hypotheses 1a and 1b), and the mediation of this moderation by ascribed leader communion (Hypotheses 2a and 2b).

Participants and Design

Two hundred fifty-three undergraduate students (127 female, 126 male) with an average age of 21.9 years ($SD = 3.2$

years) from a German university participated in the study in exchange for 10 euros. Leader gender (male vs. female), leader attractiveness (attractive vs. unattractive), and leadership style (transformational vs. transactional) were varied in a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight experimental conditions. Participant gender (male vs. female) was accounted for as a quasi-experimental factor. Participant evaluations of trust, loyalty, and ascribed leader communion were collected as measures of our dependent and mediating variables respectively.

Materials

Leader Gender and Leader Attractiveness

A portrait photograph presented in the leader's curriculum vitae (CV) served to manipulate leader gender and leader attractiveness. The photographs represented the four categories: (1) attractive male leader, (2) unattractive male leader, (3) attractive female leader, and (4) unattractive female leader.

In a pretest, 45 undergraduate students (22 female, 23 male) from a German university evaluated a set of 38 portrait photographs displaying men and women with a neutral facial expression. The photographs were collected from online databases and standardized with regard to their display (e.g., neutral background, black-and-white). All stimulus persons depicted in the photographs were rated according to their attractiveness and credibility as a leader. Ratings were conducted on a 5-point semantic differential (e.g., 1 = unattractive, 5 = attractive). In exchange for participation, students received a 10 euro voucher for Amazon.

Subsequently, photographs for the main study were selected: First, photographs of women and men were separately ranked from unattractive to attractive based on participants' evaluations. For each group, the three most unattractive and three most attractive photographs were selected. Second, for each of the four experimental conditions (i.e., attractive vs. unattractive, female vs. male leader) the photograph with the highest rating of credibility as a leader was selected. Finally, *t*-tests for perceived attractiveness were conducted. The attractive woman ($M = 4.53$) was evaluated as significantly higher in attractiveness than the unattractive woman, $M = 1.80$, $t(44) = 17.41$, $p < .001$. The same was true for the attractive man ($M = 3.84$) in comparison to the unattractive man, $M = 1.36$, $t(44) = 15.78$, $p < .001$.

For purposes of manipulation check, we included one item measuring leader attractiveness in a 5-point semantic differential (1 = unattractive, 5 = attractive) in the main study.

Leadership Style

Letters from the leader served to manipulate leadership style. Two vignettes were utilized for each of the two study conditions (transformational vs. transactional). Per condition, the first vignette was an introduction letter from the

new professor at a chair of business studies to his/her team. The second vignette was an e-mail with information about a project that the professor was planning to implement. The length of vignettes was held constant over both conditions (approximately 400–500 words).

Transformational leadership style was manipulated based on its four dimensions: inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Specifically, the transformational leader introduced his/her future vision for the chair, and encouraged team members' contribution (inspirational motivation), demonstrated openness to and appreciation of suggestions (intellectual stimulation), addressed followers' personal needs and wishes (individualized consideration), stressed the willingness to act as a role model, and promised to meet his/her own standards (idealized influence).

Transactional leadership style was manipulated by two dimensions: contingent reward and management by exception active (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). The transactional leader particularly stressed important goals for team members in the next months, communicated equivalent rewards for achievement (contingent reward), and pointed out that he/she planned to critically evaluate recent standards in order to detect mistakes (management by exception active).

In a pretest, 39 undergraduate students (18 female, 20 male, one missing) from a German university were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (transformational vs. transactional leadership). To test whether vignettes were perceived as intended, students rated their perceptions of leadership style expressed in the vignettes via paper-pencil questionnaires. Ratings were based on items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5x-short (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 2000), the most widely used questionnaire for measurement of transformational and transactional leadership. Participants evaluated transformational and transactional leadership style expressed in the vignettes on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Subsequent analysis of variance with two composite scales for transformational leadership (15 items, $\alpha = .93$) and transactional leadership (6 items, $\alpha = .75$) revealed evaluations of the vignettes in the expected directions. The vignettes displaying transformational leadership style were ascribed significantly higher ratings of transformational leadership ($M = 3.86$) than vignettes displaying transactional leadership style, $M = 2.71$; $F(1, 38) = 48.371$, $p < .001$. The transactional leader was ascribed significantly higher levels of transactional leadership ($M = 4.11$) than the transformational leader, $M = 3.39$; $F(1, 38) = 18.112$, $p < .001$.

As manipulation check, items from the MLQ 5x-Short (Bass & Avolio, 2000) as used in the pretest were applied. Accordingly, items referred to transformational leadership (15 items, $\alpha = .92$) and transactional leadership (5 items, $\alpha = .63$). Sample items included "The professor seeks differing perspectives when solving problems" (transformational leadership), and "The professor makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved" (transactional leadership). Participants' ratings

were conducted on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Ascribed Leader Communion

We employed a standardized scale of ascribed leader communion (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007) including four items ($\alpha = .86$): supportive (1 = not supportive, 5 = supportive), understanding (1 = not understanding, 5 = understanding), sensitive (1 = not sensitive, 5 = sensitive), and caring (1 = not caring, 5 = caring).

Follower Trust

We measured followers' trust in the leader with four items ($\alpha = .87$) of affect-based trust adapted from McAllister (1995). Sample items include "If I shared my problems with this professor, I know (s)he would respond constructively and caringly." Participants' ratings were conducted on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Follower Loyalty

A loyalty measure was adapted from Chen et al. (2002) referring to four dimensions (i.e., dedication, effort, following, and identification). We applied the composite measure of loyalty (14 items, $\alpha = .91$). Sample items include "I would support the professor in almost any case of emergency." Participants' ratings were conducted on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1 presents correlations between study variables.

Procedure

Participants were invited to a scientific laboratory. They were informed that the subsequent study dealt with collaboration in academic contexts. The context of academia was chosen because it is a work setting students are particularly familiar with. The entire study (i.e., presentation of the cover

story, manipulations, and collection of participant ratings) was computer based.

Participants were instructed to envision themselves as a PhD student conducting research for a chair of business studies at a German university. They were informed that only recently a new professor had taken responsibility for the chair. Participants received a short CV of the professor with information on career development, research interests, publications, and reviewer experience. The CV contained a photograph of the professor to manipulate gender and attractiveness. Except for the variation of the photograph and the professor's name (male vs. female), information was held constant in all experimental conditions.

After reading the CV, participants received an introduction letter from the professor. The letter served to manipulate leadership style. It contained a first introduction to all chair members via e-mail, in which the professor stated ideas for future collaboration at the chair.

Subsequently, participants were informed about a project that the professor was planning to implement (i.e., conducting a survey on student and faculty satisfaction). Information on the project was received in a second e-mail from the professor directly addressed to the respective participant. Again, this letter served to manipulate leadership style. In the letter, the professor pointed out that (a) the project was of high importance to him/her and that (b) the probability of getting the dean's approval for the project was rather low, highly depending upon the project's quality. Participants were informed that the professor was seeking their support for this project. After reading the letter participants were asked to rate their trust and loyalty toward the professor.

Finally, participants' demographic data (e.g., gender, age) were assessed, and participants were informed about the study background and manipulations.

Results

Manipulation Check

Leader Attractiveness

By analysis of variance for attractiveness ratings, a significant and strong main effect for the experimental factor

Table 1. Correlations between study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Leader gender					
2. Leader attractiveness	-.02				
3. Leadership style	.01	.00			
4. Ascribed leader communion	.03	-.01	.66**		
5. Follower trust	.06	-.04	.66**	.79**	
6. Follower loyalty	.02	-.01	.46**	.63**	.75**

Notes. $N = 253$. The dichotomous variables leader gender (male = 0, female = 1), leader attractiveness (unattractive = 0, attractive = 1), and leadership style (transactional = 0, transformational = 1) were dummy coded. Ratings of the continuous variables ascribed leader communion, follower trust, and follower loyalty were accomplished on a 5-point scale. ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test).

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for dependent variables by leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style

		Female leader		Male leader	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Dependent variable					
Ascribed leader communion					
Attractive leader	Transactional	2.48	.70	2.54	.69
	Transformational	3.36	.70	3.91	.80
Unattractive leader	Transactional	2.58	.76	2.34	.57
	Transformational	4.02	.58	3.48	.59
Follower trust					
Attractive leader	Transactional	2.02	.69	1.89	.68
	Transformational	3.00	.70	3.54	.97
Unattractive leader	Transactional	2.14	.89	1.86	.47
	Transformational	3.65	.71	3.12	.84
Follower loyalty					
Attractive leader	Transactional	2.63	.60	2.46	.62
	Transformational	3.00	.61	3.38	.68
Unattractive leader	Transactional	2.56	.65	2.61	.57
	Transformational	3.35	.51	3.02	.51

Notes. $N = 253$. Ratings of the continuous variables ascribed leader communion, follower trust, and follower loyalty were accomplished on a 5-point scale.

leader attractiveness was obtained, $F(1, 251) = 190.701$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .432$. Thus, participants perceived leaders in the attractive condition ($M = 3.63$) as significantly more attractive than in the unattractive condition ($M = 2.02$). Results indicated that the manipulation of leader attractiveness was effective.

Leadership Style

The manipulation of transformational and transactional leadership style had a strong influence on participants' evaluations of leadership style, $F(2, 250) = 206.849$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .623$. Leaders in the transactional condition were perceived as significantly more transactional ($M = 4.09$) than transformational ($M = 3.04$), $F(1, 251) = 119.522$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .323$. Leaders in the transformational condition were evaluated as significantly more transformational ($M = 4.09$) than transactional ($M = 3.35$), $F(1, 251) = 207.194$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .452$. Results indicated that the manipulation of leadership style was effective.

Data Analysis

Due to the empirical relatedness of our dependent variables, namely followers' trust and loyalty toward the leader, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted (Huberty & Morris, 1989). Participants' gender was included as a quasi-experimental factor. First, a significant two-way interaction was obtained between leader gender and leader attractiveness, $F(2, 236) = 5.403$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .044$. Second, a significant three-way interaction of leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style occurred, $F(2, 236) = 4.714$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .038$. The initial MANOVA revealed that participant gender did not interact

with the other three independent variables to predict followers' trust and loyalty toward the leader, $F(2, 236) = 1.784$, $p = .17$.

Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for dependent variables by leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style.

Follower Trust

Regarding Hypothesis 1a the respective ANOVA revealed the predicted significant three-way interaction of leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style for follower trust, $F(1, 237) = 5.978$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .025$.

In the transformational condition, leader gender and leader attractiveness interacted to predict trust with negative consequences of high attractiveness for female but not for male leaders, $F(1, 120) = 13.449$, $p < .001$. That is, attractive female leaders were rated significantly lower on trust ($M = 3.00$) as compared to unattractive female leaders ($M = 3.65$). Attractiveness had the opposite effect for attractive male leaders who were ascribed significantly higher levels of trust ($M = 3.54$) than unattractive male leaders ($M = 3.12$).

In the transactional condition, neither for attractive as compared to unattractive female leaders nor for attractive as compared to unattractive male leaders significant differences in trust ratings occurred, $F(1, 125) = 0.357$, $p = .55$.

Follower Loyalty

Regarding Hypothesis 1b, the respective ANOVA revealed the predicted significant three-way interaction of leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style for follower loyalty, $F(1, 237) = 9.076$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .037$.

In the transformational condition, leader gender and leader attractiveness interacted to predict loyalty with negative consequences of high attractiveness for female but not for male leaders, $F(1, 120) = 11.626$, $p < .01$. That is, for attractive female leaders, followers showed significantly lower levels of loyalty ($M = 3.00$) than for unattractive female leaders ($M = 3.35$). Attractiveness had the opposite effect for attractive male leaders who elicited significantly higher levels of loyalty ($M = 3.38$) than unattractive male leaders ($M = 3.02$).

In the transactional condition, neither for male nor for female leaders, significant differences in loyalty ratings according to their attractiveness were obtained, $F(1, 125) = 1.094$, $p = .30$.

Ascribed Leader Communion as a Mediator

In order to test Hypotheses 2a and 2b, we followed regression procedures as suggested by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003), and tested the significance of the mediated moderation via bootstrapping method as suggested by Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt (2005).

In concordance with the hypotheses, the respective analyses included data from the transformational leadership style condition, but not from the transactional leadership style condition. As required for subsequent analyses, we centered the continuous mediator variable ascribed leader communion, and calculated the interaction term of leader gender (dummy coded: male = 0, female = 1) and leader attractiveness (dummy coded: unattractive = 0, attractive = 1). In separate analyses for the two dependent variables, follower trust and loyalty, we then regressed each dependent variable simultaneously on the two independent variables, and their interaction. Further, we regressed the mediator ascribed leader communion on the two independent variables, and their interaction. Next, we regressed each dependent variable simultaneously on the two independent variables, their interaction term, and entered ascribed leader communion as the proposed mediator. Finally, we conducted bootstrapping analyses to test whether the indirect effect of the interaction term of leader gender and leader attractive-

ness on the two dependent variables mediated by ascribed leader communion was significant.

For follower trust, the dependent variable in Hypothesis 2a, regression on the two independent variables and their interaction revealed a significant negative effect of the interaction term of leader gender and leader attractiveness on follower trust ($\beta = -.54$, $p < .001$), indicating that attractive female leaders received significantly lower ratings of follower trust. Next, regression of the hypothesized mediator ascribed leader communion on the two independent variables and their interaction yielded a significant negative effect of the interaction term of leader gender and leader attractiveness on ascribed leader communion ($\beta = -.65$, $p < .001$), indicating that attractive female leaders received significantly lower communion ratings. Finally, regression of follower trust on the two independent variables, their interaction term, and ascribed leader communion as the proposed mediator yielded a significant positive effect of ascribed leader communion on follower trust ($\beta = .64$, $p < .001$), but a nonsignificant effect of the interaction term of leader gender and leader attractiveness on follower trust ($\beta = -.13$, $p = .324$), indicating a mediated moderation effect, as expected. Results are summarized in Figure 1.

The 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of the interaction of leader gender and leader attractiveness on follower trust mediated by ascribed leader communion obtained via bootstrapping with 1,000 iterations did not contain zero (95% CI = $-.78$ to $-.17$). Therefore, the indirect effect was significant ($p < .05$).

For follower loyalty, the dependent variable in Hypothesis 2b, regression on the two independent variables and their interaction revealed a significant negative effect of the interaction term of leader gender and leader attractiveness on follower loyalty ($\beta = -.51$, $p < .001$), indicating that attractive female leaders received significantly lower ratings of follower loyalty. As indicated above, regression of the hypothesized mediator ascribed leader communion on the two independent variables and their interaction yielded a significant negative effect of the interaction term of leader gender and leader attractiveness on ascribed leader communion ($\beta = -.65$, $p < .001$), indicating that attractive female leaders received significantly lower communion ratings. Finally,

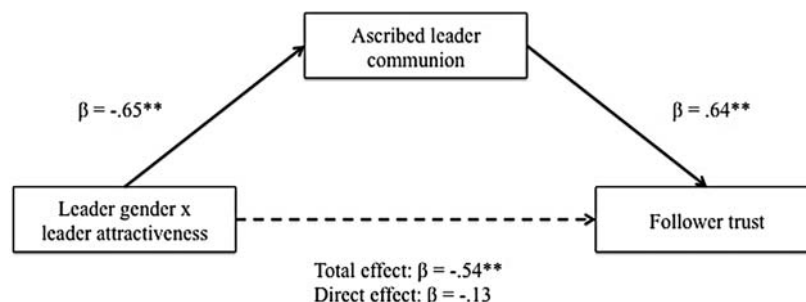


Figure 1. Mediated moderation of the interaction of leader gender and leader attractiveness for follower trust by ascribed leader communion. All path coefficients represent standardized regression weights. Total R^2 for the model = .45, $F(5, 118) = 19.533$, $p < .001$. ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test). $N = 124$.

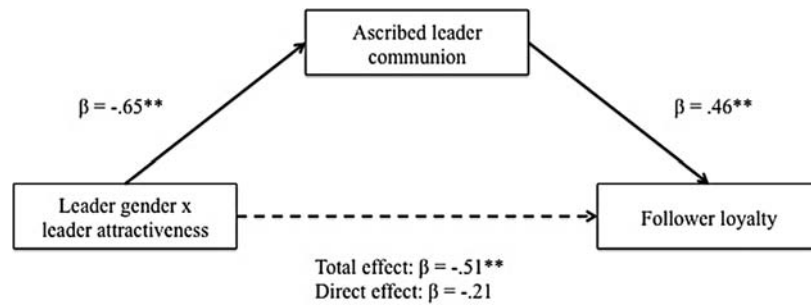


Figure 2. Mediated moderation of the interaction of leader gender and leader attractiveness for follower loyalty by ascribed leader communion. All path coefficients represent standardized regression weights. Total R^2 for the model = .29, $F(5, 118) = 9.551$, $p < .001$. ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test). $N = 124$.

regression of follower loyalty on the two independent variables, their interaction term, and ascribed leader communion as the proposed mediator yielded a significant positive effect of ascribed leader communion on follower loyalty ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$), but a nonsignificant effect of the interaction term of leader gender and leader attractiveness on follower loyalty ($\beta = -.21$, $p = .157$), indicating a mediated moderation effect, as expected. Results are summarized in Figure 2.

The 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of the interaction of leader gender and leader attractiveness on follower trust mediated by ascribed leader communion obtained via bootstrapping with 1,000 iterations did not contain zero (95% CI = $-.53$ to $-.10$). Therefore, the indirect effect was significant ($p < .05$).

Discussion

Our study addressed three important shortcomings in earlier theory and research: First, we tested implications of the “beauty is beastly” effect going beyond personnel selection by focusing on the effect on followers’ trust and loyalty toward female leaders. Second, we explored transformational leadership style, which had been discussed – but not empirically established – as a moderator of gender stereotypical devaluation of attractive female leaders. Third, we investigated whether the negative effects of attractiveness for female leaders with a transformational leadership style were mediated by ascribed leader communion.

The study results advance our knowledge in this research area in the following ways: To begin with, this is the first empirical study to consider the interaction of leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style. It was not clear from earlier research whether transformational leadership indeed best represents the female leadership advantage or a disadvantage (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2003a, 2003b). This question is of particular importance since a transformational leadership style in general is assumed to belong to the most influential factors of leader effectiveness (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Therefore, studying the interaction of leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style regarding its impact on more profound variables (i.e.,

beyond leader competence evaluations) is highly relevant. We chose trust and loyalty as two well-established organizational outcomes (Chen et al., 2002; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001, 2002; Jung et al., 2009).

Indeed, our results showed that the interaction of leader gender, leader attractiveness, and leadership style significantly influenced followers’ trust and loyalty toward their leader. In the transactional leadership condition, followers’ loyalty toward attractive as compared to unattractive leaders did not differ. This was equally true for female and for male leaders. In contrast, in the transformational leadership condition, followers showed lower levels of trust and loyalty toward attractive than unattractive female leaders.

Therefore, we concluded that attractiveness is not always an asset for female leaders. Even though attractiveness has been found to predict positive consequences in organizational settings in general (Cherulnik, 1995; Hosoda et al., 2003; Judge, Hurst, & Simon, 2009), our results suggest that pronounced attractiveness is clearly disadvantageous for female leaders, particularly when women display a transformational leadership style. Thereby our study represents an extended perspective to the female leader advantage (Eagly & Carli, 2003a) that requires further testing.

Second, our data strengthened the view that attractiveness contributes to a perceived lack of fit between agency-related leader role and communion-related female gender role, ultimately resulting in negative evaluations of attractive as compared to unattractive female leaders when they display a transformational leadership style (Heilman & Stopeck, 1985; Johnson et al., 2010). In our study, attractive as compared to unattractive female leaders with a transformational leadership style were ascribed lower levels of communion. Ascribed leader communion, in turn, mediated the negative effect of attractiveness on followers’ trust and loyalty for female leaders with a transformational leadership style. It is therefore viable to assume that the perceived lack of fit as described above promotes followers’ interpersonal devaluation and resulting negative attitudes (i.e., reduced trust and loyalty) toward the attractive transformational female leader.

Third, we revealed the relevance of stereotype activation in early stages of impression formation when only limited information on leaders’ attributes and behavior are

obtainable. Therefore, our results supported the notion that when women apply for or have recently taken on leadership responsibility they are particularly vulnerable to stereotypical evaluations as based on their physical appearance (Heilman, 2001; Sczesny et al., 2006).

Practical Implications

The results described above hold important implications for leaders in organizations, in particular for female leaders, but also for their followers, as well as for anyone who evaluates leaders and their effectiveness in organizational contexts. Most importantly, the restrictions of displaying a transformational leadership style became evident in our study: Attractive as compared to unattractive female leaders elicited lower levels of trust and loyalty in their followers when they displayed a transformational leadership style, but not when they displayed a transactional leadership style. This result has important implications in at least four regards:

First, the study raised the awareness of female leaders, and of women aspiring to leadership positions, with regard to the potential impact of their physical appearance on their evaluations as a leader as well as on followers' attitudes toward them (Sczesny et al., 2006). Our results should prevent attractive female leaders from relying on the previously suggested positive effects of high attractiveness in organizational contexts, especially without engaging in critical reflection of their leadership style.

Second, the findings obtained from our study are of particular relevance for leaders in initial interactions with evaluators. They provide important hints to improve the selection and assessment of leaders in organizations. We agree with earlier research to suggest that leadership assessments must be conducted in a structured manner, primarily based on behavioral criteria with relevance to their effectiveness as a leader as opposed to aspects related to candidates' gender role (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). This approach would serve to counteract biased evaluations toward female leaders based on their attractiveness.

Third, it is a question of ongoing discussion in many countries (such as Germany) whether applicant portraits should or should not be part of application material (Watkins & Johnston, 2000). Our results clearly suggested that excluding photographs from application materials would be a valid initial attempt to improve the fairness of selection procedures for male and female applicants. Moreover, organizations should reconsider and evaluate the degree to which they make use of feminine and masculine typed job descriptions in announcements of leadership positions (Reinhard, Schindler, Stahlberg, Messner, & Mucha, 2011; Stahlberg & Sczesny, 2001).

Fourth, training approaches tailored to the needs of female leaders should take our findings into account. Informing women, especially attractive ones, with regard to a balanced expression of their communal and agentic characteristics appears to be one viable approach. However, trainings aiming at a less biased evaluation of attractive female leaders within organizations can also take on a broader perspective. Drawing upon our results and earlier

research (Duehr & Bono, 2006; Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001), we highly recommend not only enhanced training of (future) female leaders, but also of young professionals in general with regard to the pitfalls of biased perceptions and evaluations based on gender stereotypes in organizational settings.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Naturally, the study presented above is not free of limitations. First, due to the experimental setting, we were only able to simulate organizational reality. The question requires further testing whether results can be transferred to organizational contexts directly. However, it is noteworthy that we chose the academic context as a work setting in which students have considerable experience. That is, the interaction between professors in the leader role and students in the follower role represented a real-life work setting.

Second, although we had carefully pretested and checked the manipulation of the photographs used in our study, the replication of the presented findings with a different set of photographs is desirable in order to meet the requirements of stimulus sampling (Wells & Windschitl, 1999) and to ensure generalizability of results.

Third, since female professors are still underrepresented in academia (Madera, Hebl, & Martin, 2009), it is possible that this context was perceived as typically masculine. We sought to counteract this potential influence by referring to business studies as a rather gender-neutral academic field. Yet, it would be important to compare the effects in a stereotypically male as compared to a stereotypically female work setting (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Johnson et al., 2010).

Conclusion

Despite the limitations discussed above, our study contributes substantially to the question to what degree leader attractiveness and leadership style interact with leader gender to predict followers' trust and loyalty toward their leader. Clear support for the "beauty is beastly" effect was found: High levels of attractiveness led to unfavorable follower evaluations of trust and loyalty only for female, but not for male leaders. Particularly, followers' trust and loyalty toward attractive female leaders were impaired under a transformational leadership style. A lack of ascribed leader communion mediated the negative influence of leader attractiveness on followers' trust and loyalty toward female leaders with a transformational leadership style. That is, our study revealed the devaluation of attractive female leaders with a transformational leadership style as a potential mechanism, which hinders the ascent and success of women in leadership positions. A more thorough understanding of this mechanism is crucial to counteract gender-biased evaluations, and to achieve gender equality in organizational settings.

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