

## Gender Differences in the Perceived Effectiveness of Narcissistic Leaders

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Researchers have obtained inconsistent results on the relationship between leader narcissism and leader effectiveness evaluations. Here we draw on social role theory and recent findings on prescriptive gender stereotypes to propose that leader's and follower's gender influence the degree to which narcissistic leaders are perceived as effective. Narcissistic female leaders lack stereotypically gender appropriate qualities (e.g. kindness) and demonstrate undesirable qualities associated with the other gender (e.g. arrogance). This combination is potentially threatening to the traditionally higher status of males, thus resulting in poor leader effectiveness ratings, especially by male subordinates. Conversely, we expect narcissism to be tolerated in male leaders. We find support for this idea in a study on 145 leader subordinate dyads. Female narcissistic leaders were seen as less effective than male narcissistic leaders. However, looking more closely, these lower ratings were only found when male subordinates served as raters. Specifically, male subordinates rated female narcissistic leaders lower while their effectiveness ratings of male leaders were not affected by narcissism. Female subordinates showed no gender bias in their effectiveness evaluations of narcissistic leaders. Thus, gender differences may be an important source of inconsistencies in evaluations of narcissistic leaders.

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## INTRODUCTION

Narcissism, a personality dimension characterised by a grandiose sense of self-importance (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006), is often linked to leadership (for reviews see Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissists are dominant and arrogant and have high self-esteem. Many of the world's (business) leaders are ascribed such narcissistic characteristics and narcissism has also been linked to leader emergence (Brunell, Gentry, Campbell, Hoffman, Kuhnert, & DeMarree, 2008; Maccoby, 2000; Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, Beersma, & McIlwain, 2011a; Paunonen, Lonnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006).

However, narcissism may be a mixed blessing for leaders (Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012; Paulhus, 1998) and research findings on the relationship of narcissism with leader effectiveness have been inconsistent. On the positive side, narcissists possess traits such as authority, confidence, dominance, and high self-esteem which are the ingredients people tend to look for in a leader (Judge, Bono, Iles, & Gerhardt, 2002; Smith & Foti, 1998). In line with this, some studies show that narcissists are rated favorably as leaders (Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka, Ten Velden, De Hoogh, & Van Vianen, 2011b). However, on the negative or "dark" side, narcissists are also seen as arrogant, egocentric, ruthless, and even hostile (Paulhus, 1998). Furthermore, narcissists' self-centered attitude can lead them to pursue their own goals at the long-term cost to others (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005) and bully their subordinates (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007). In line with this, there are several studies that have shown narcissistic leaders to be rated as ineffective leaders (Judge et al., 2006; Resick, Whitman, Weingarden, & Hiller, 2009). This begs the question as to when this negative side of narcissists is perceived to overshadow the positive side and hinders leaders' effectiveness.

Researchers may have overlooked an important source of inconsistencies in evaluations of narcissistic leaders, namely gender differences. Research has long shown that the same characteristics are evaluated differently when displayed by men and women depending on what is socially expected and accepted sex role behavior (Bowen, Swim, & Jacobs, 2000; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Evidence indicates that leaders who show *undesirable* qualities associated with the other gender are evaluated most negatively (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999). Research also suggests that men are more punitive of violations of gender stereotypes than women (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Thus, we suggest that leader and subordinate gender are critical factors in determining whether narcissistic leaders are perceived by their followers as effective leaders or not.

We propose that (the negative side of) narcissism which includes agentic traits such as arrogance, egocentrism, ruthlessness, and hostility is tolerated for male leaders, but perceived as gender inappropriate, undesirable, and threatening to the traditionally higher status of males when displayed by female leaders (Carli, Lafleur, & Loeber, 1995). In other words, highly narcissistic female leaders violate the gender stereotype by displaying undesirable qualities associated with the other gender and we expect that this will be reflected in negative evaluations of their leadership, especially by male subordinates. Male narcissistic leaders, who are not in violation of their gender stereotype, are likely to be seen as more effective than female narcissistic leaders. Using a sample of 145 leader-subordinate dyads, we examine the joint effects of leader narcissism and leader and subordinate gender on perceived leader effectiveness. In addition, because gender-stereotypic sex differences are typically found to be less pronounced for women in leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990), we test whether the finding that in the general population men are more narcissistic than women also holds in a leadership context.

The present research thus (a) extends the leadership literature by identifying leader's and follower's gender as moderators of the relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leader (in)effectiveness, (b) contributes to the gender literature by providing a first examination of how gender may affect the perceived effectiveness of narcissistic leaders, (c) extends earlier literature on narcissism and gender by studying the link between narcissism and gender in the leadership domain, and (d) has practical implications in terms of when narcissistic leaders are most likely to be perceived as (in)effective.

## Leader Narcissism, Leader Gender, and Perceived Leader Effectiveness

Narcissism as a personality dimension is described as an affective and cognitive preoccupation with oneself and an excessive and defensive assertion of status and superiority (Locke, 2009; Westen, 1990). This trait is derived from the clinical criteria for narcissistic personality disorder based on the classic psychodynamic work of Freud (1914), but is applied to a normal population (for reviews see Campbell et al., 2011; Emmons, 1987). Narcissists have an inflated view of the self and an insatiable need for having this self-view reinforced (Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). They are preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, believe they are special and unique, require excessive admiration, have a sense of entitlement, and are interpersonally exploitative and arrogant and haughty (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Prior research on narcissism in the general population has linked narcissism with high self-esteem (Emmons, 1984; for a meta-analytic investigation see Rosenthal, Montoya, Ridings, Rieck, & Hooley, 2011), overconfidence in one's abilities (Campbell et al., 2004; Robins & Beer, 2001), disagreeableness and anger (Holtzman, Vazire, & Mehl, 2010; Rosenthal et al., 2011; Twenge & Campbell, 2003), egocentrism (Westen, 1990), dominance and power (Carroll, 1987; Emmons, 1989), authority (Nevicka et al., 2011b), approach motivation (Foster & Trimm, 2008), competitiveness (Raskin & Terry, 1988), sensitivity to and frequency of downward social comparisons (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Krizan & Bushman, 2011), and extraversion (Foster, Misra, & Reidy, 2009; Holtzman et al., 2010; Lee & Ashton, 2005).

Prior research has also linked narcissism to leader emergence (Brunell et al., 2008; Nevicka et al., 2011a; Paunonen et al., 2006), presumably because several narcissistic characteristics overlap with work group members' implicit expectations for how leaders should behave or in other words the typical leadership prototype. For example, both narcissism and the typical leadership prototype include confidence, dominance, and extraversion, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Judge et al., 2002, Paunonen et al., 2006; Smith & Foti, 1998). In addition, narcissists are perceived as more intelligent by others (Paulhus, 1998), and intelligence is also an important leadership trait. If an individual matches the prototypical attributes that people implicitly associate with a leader he or she is more likely to be viewed as a leader and to be perceived as effective (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Lord & Maher, 1991).

However, findings on the link between leader narcissism and leader effectiveness evaluations have been inconsistent. On the one hand, narcissists may incorporate prototypical leader characteristics such as confidence. Their (over)confidence may mean that they radiate an image of authority and persuade others to accept this image of authority and to perceive them as effective leaders. In line with this, research shows that narcissistic leaders were perceived by others as effective in a group decision task and they were rated positively as leaders in the context of a management course (Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011b). Also, agentic self-enhancement, one of the key characteristics of narcissism, has been shown to positively predict leadership effectiveness among military officers (Lönngqvist, Paunonen, Nissinen, Ortju, & Verkasalo, 2011).

On the other hand, narcissists are also arrogant, egocentric, ruthless, and even hostile (Paulhus, 1998). They are suggested to be motivated by their own need for power and admiration (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985) and tend to be exploitative and manipulative (Babiak, 1995; Campbell et al., 2005; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissistic leaders' sense of entitlement and egoism may cause them to be unethical (Maccoby, 2000; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) and pursue their own goals at long-term costs to others, as

was shown in a study on tragedy of the commons (Campbell et al., 2005). Research also shows that narcissism is linked to Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) and narcissistic leaders have been referred to in the literature as representing the dark side of leadership (Lönnqvist et al., 2011; Resick et al., 2009). Accordingly, narcissism was negatively related to perceptions of leadership capabilities for leaders of Major League Baseball organisations and beach patrols (Judge et al., 2006; Resick et al., 2009). Thus, existing research shows that narcissism can relate both positively and negatively to perceived leader effectiveness.

We argue that leader's and follower's gender influence these effectiveness perceptions. Research has long provided evidence that valued interpersonal behavior varies by gender depending on what is socially expected and accepted sex role behavior. Drawing on social role theory (Eagly, 1987), women are expected to be communal (e.g. helpful, nurturing, gentle, nice) while men are expected to be agentic (e.g. assertive, controlling, confident, individualistic) and when a person does not behave consistently with these expectations, this person is evaluated more negatively (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 1992; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Heilman, 2001). Moreover, people showing undesirable qualities associated with the other gender are evaluated most harshly (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999).

Because many of the narcissistic characteristics overlap with socially undesirable agentic traits (e.g. arrogant, insensitive, ruthless; Campbell et al., 2002; Paulhus & John, 1998; Prentice & Carranza, 2002) rather than communal ones, the expectations for how women should behave are in stark contrast with the behavior of narcissistic leaders. Women are expected to engage in social behaviors such as being modest, tender, compassionate, warm, sympathetic, sensitive, and understanding (Martin, 1987). Thus, they are seen to violate stereotypical gender role expectations when they openly display narcissistic characteristics such as an inflated sense of self-importance, dominance, entitlement, and lack of empathy.

Narcissistic females are likely to be viewed as particularly negative as they not only lack the desired qualities expected of their own gender (e.g. being nice), but also demonstrate undesirable qualities associated with the other gender (e.g. arrogance, insensitivity, ruthlessness; see Prentice & Carranza, 2002, for an overview of prescriptive gender stereotypes). Subordinates reporting to narcissistic female leaders may be influenced by a negative halo effect ("horns" effect; Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, & Stovall, 2007) in which an overall negative appraisal is made based on a few undesirable qualities that may prevent subordinates from noticing the more positive aspects of their narcissistic leader (e.g. authority, confidence, dominance). Related research supports this idea. For example, Rudman's (1998) and Rudman and

Glick's (1999) demonstrations of backlash against women involve targets who not only violate feminine niceness prescriptions, but also show signs of arrogance.

In line with this, research shows that women in leadership positions are evaluated negatively if they violate gender role expectancies by being autocratic and directive (Eagly et al., 1992). Narcissism for female leaders should thus be seen as ineffective. In addition, in men being arrogant is more tolerated, and to some degree they are even expected to show dominance and to behave assertively for their own self-interests (Martin, 1987; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Thus, for male leaders, narcissism is less incongruent with the expected sex role behavior. We thus expect female narcissistic leaders to be perceived as less effective than male narcissistic leaders.

*Hypothesis 1:* Leader gender moderates the relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leader effectiveness, such that female narcissistic leaders are perceived as less effective than male narcissistic leaders.

## Leader–Subordinate Gender and Perceived Effectiveness of Narcissistic Leaders

Gender role expectations regarding leadership have been found to differ depending on the rater's gender. Generally, men tend to hold more negative attitudes toward women in management than do women (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; McGlashan, Wright, & McCormick, 1995; Tomkiewicz, Frankel, Adeyemi-Bello, & Sagan, 2004). This is presumably because men are less likely than women to have experience with female managers (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2009) and men's group interest favors retaining these roles for men (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). In other words, female leadership upsets traditional relations and may represent a threat to men. Men have more to lose than women by approving female leadership because the status of males compared to the traditionally lower status of females would decline (Eagly et al., 1992). This reasoning is referred to as the gender hierarchy argument.

We propose that female narcissistic leaders in particular, with their display of agentic traits such as dominance, entitlement, and competitiveness, as well as inimical traits such as arrogance, ruthlessness, and insensitivity, would be especially disruptive to the traditional patterns of deference between women and men (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). According to the gender hierarchy argument, not only is leadership a male prerogative, the display by females of status cues such as dominance and superiority to male subordinates involves another violation of gender norms, as traditionally women have a lower status than men. In line with this, previous research has found dominant women and women who use more assertive speech to be less influential with

men than less dominant and assertive women (Carli, 1990; Wiley & Eskilson, 1985). Moreover, the display of narcissistic traits such as haughtiness, arrogance, ruthlessness, and insensitivity conflicts with the prescription of feminine niceness (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999). Research suggests that in order to influence men, women must appear to be sociable, likeable people. Such a style would be less threatening to men as it would implicitly communicate that these females have no desire to usurp male status (Carli et al., 1995).

Thus, female narcissistic leaders are expected to be particularly devalued by male subordinates, because for these subordinates they not only violate gender role expectations, but also gender status rules, and this combination may be perceived as especially threatening. By approving narcissistic female leadership, the status of male subordinates would (further) decline. Thus, we expect that male subordinates perceive narcissism for female leaders as ineffective. In addition, we expect male subordinates to perceive female leaders who are high in narcissism as being less effective than male leaders who are high in narcissism because female narcissistic leaders are in violation of their sex and status roles, while male narcissistic leaders are not. On the other hand, a situation where a narcissist female is leading female followers might not be deemed as unconventional as where a narcissist female leader is leading male followers. In addition, females in general tend to hold less negative attitudes toward women in management than men do (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; McGlashan et al., 1995; Tomkiewicz et al., 2004). As noted, females are also less punitive of violations of gender stereotypes than males are (Costrich et al., 1975; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Therefore, we expect female subordinates to perceive female leaders high in narcissism as more effective compared to the perceptions of male subordinates.

*Hypothesis 2:* The effect of a female leader's narcissism on perceived leader effectiveness will be moderated by the subordinate's gender such that male subordinates compared to female subordinates will perceive female narcissist leaders to be less effective.

## Leader Narcissism and Leader Gender

People's gender role expectations not only guide our perceptions of leadership and effectiveness, they also guide how we act ourselves (Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001). People may internalise cultural expectations about their sex and consequently be intrinsically motivated to act in a manner consistent with their gender roles (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). As narcissists are inherently more agentic than communal (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Helgeson, 1994) and traditional gender norms prescribe men to be agentic and women to be communal and nice, this may contribute to higher levels of narcissism in men while discouraging narcissism

in women (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Campbell et al., 2002; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994; Keiller, 2010). The development of narcissism has also been argued to be intertwined with male psychodynamic development (for an account see Philipson, 1985). In line with this, previous research has generally found men to be more narcissistic than women (Farwell & Wohlwend Lloyd, 1998; Gabriel et al., 1994; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Tschanz, Morf, & Turner, 1998). The potential link between narcissism and gender in the leadership domain is, however, not yet fully clear.

Because male and female managers are selected by similar criteria and subjected to organisational socialisation forces that tend to equalise the sexes, gender-stereotypic sex differences are less common in leadership studies (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Moreover, it has been suggested that female leaders need to be high on agentic characteristics to be able to make it at the top of organisations (Fagenson, 1990; Powell & Butterfield, 1989; Powell, Posner, & Schmidt, 1984; Steinberg & Shapiro, 1982), and that this works well as long as these traits do not conflict with the prescription for females of being nice (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999). Indeed, research has found that women in the upper level of the organisational hierarchy report possessing more agentic characteristics than women at lower levels (Fagenson, 1990).

However, many of the narcissistic traits, such as being haughty, ruthless, and arrogant, are agentic but also undesirable traits that typically clash with females' prescription of being nice, and, consequently are likely to be unacceptable for female leaders while allowed for male leaders (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999). Indeed, several researchers have noted that narcissism in relation to leadership is often seen as an inherently masculine construct (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008; Jørstad, 1996). Thus, we expect that the suggested equalisation of sexes on agentic attributes in a leadership context (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990) does not hold for leaders' narcissism. Following previous research in the general population, we expect male leaders to be more narcissistic than female leaders.

*Hypothesis 3:* Male leaders score higher on narcissism than female leaders.

## METHOD

### Sample and Procedure

We carried out a multi-source study and the sample consisted of dyads of managers (leaders) and their subordinates working in different organisations (e.g. telecommunications, retail, government, insurance) located in the Netherlands. Management contacts were asked to voluntarily participate in the



TABLE 1  
Leader's and Subordinate's Gender

<i>Subordinates</i>	<i>Leaders</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	
Men	39	30	69
Women	39	37	76
Total	78	67	

study together with the subordinate with whom they worked most regularly due to the content of their work roles. Survey packets containing a questionnaire to be completed by the leader and one to be completed by the designated subordinate were sent to the 331 managers who agreed to participate. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a letter, and a pre-addressed and stamped return envelope so that all individual questionnaires could be returned directly to the researchers. Confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation were stressed in the accompanying letter and code numbers were included on surveys so that respondents could be correctly matched. The questionnaires were completed anonymously. Only questionnaires that were completely filled out were included.

Matched valid questionnaires of employees and their direct leader were obtained for 145 employee–leader dyads (290 individual respondents completed the questionnaire, which represents a 44% response rate). In total, 53.8 per cent of the leaders and 47.6 per cent of the subordinates were male. Table 1 gives a breakdown of leader and subordinate gender. Leaders' average age was 44 ( $SD = 9.88$ ) and for subordinates it was 35 ( $SD = 10.60$ ). For 88 per cent, the supervisor–subordinate tenure was more than 6 months.

Analyses of covariance were conducted to determine whether male and female leaders differed with respect to their age, supervisor–subordinate tenure, leader tenure, subordinate tenure, type of organisation, and sum of subordinates. We found no differences for gender with respect to these variables, age,  $F(1, 142) = 0.02$ , *ns*, supervisor–subordinate tenure,  $F(1, 143) = 0.78$ , *ns*, tenure of the leader,  $F(1, 143) = 1.87$ , *ns*, subordinate tenure,  $F(1, 143) = 0.88$ , *ns*, type of organisation,  $F(1, 142) = 1.14$ , *ns*, total subordinates,  $F(1, 143) = 0.05$ , *ns*.

## Measures

*Narcissism.* Leaders filled in the 16-item version of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16; Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006). This measure is based on the original 40-item NPI (Raskin & Hall, 1979, 1981) which has

been extensively used in prior research as a self-report measure of narcissism (e.g. Brunell et al., 2008; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). Ames et al. (2006) reported a correlation of .90 between scores on this measure and the full 40-item NPI. Ames et al. (2006) also report that the 16-item measure has notable face, internal, discriminant, and predictive validity. The NPI-16 is frequently used to measure narcissism in normal populations (e.g. Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011; Goncalo, Flynn, & Kim, 2010; Konrath, Bushman, & Tyler, 2009; Witt, Donnellan, Blonigen, Krueger, & Conger, 2010). For each of the forced-choice dyads on the scale, participants are asked to choose the response that is the most self-descriptive. An example of a narcissistic response is: "I am apt to show off if I get a chance", and the non-narcissistic response: "I try not to be a show off". The narcissism score was computed as the mean score across NPI items, with narcissism-consistent responses coded as 1 and narcissism-inconsistent responses coded as 0. One item was dropped due to a negative corrected item-total correlation. Coefficient alpha of the scale was .69.

*Perceived Leader Effectiveness.* Subordinates provided ratings of leader effectiveness using the three-item scale from De Hoogh, Den Hartog, and Koopman (2005). An example item is "How effective is the person you are evaluating as a leader?" Responses were given on a 7-point response scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*). The coefficient alpha was .88.

*Leader's and Follower's Gender.* Leader's and follower's gender were measured through a single self-report item. Gender was coded with 1 designating men and 0 designating women.

*Control Variables.* As narcissism is reported to decline with age (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003), we included leader's age as a control variable. Generally, it has been found that narcissistic individuals make very positive first impressions and that these impressions wane over time (Paulhus, 1998). Thus, we controlled for a leader's and a subordinate's organisational tenure (the length of time with the current organisation) and a subordinate's tenure with the leader (the length of the time the employee had worked with the current leader). A categorical response format was used which was coded as follows: 1 shows a tenure of 3 months or less; 2 shows a tenure of 3 to 6 months; 3 shows a tenure of 6 months to one year; 4 shows a tenure of 1 year to 5 years; and 5 shows a tenure greater than 5 years. Tenure with the leader did not significantly alter the variables or relationships in our study, so we removed it from subsequent analyses to conserve statistical power. Finally, as larger spans of control can diminish a leader's ability to influence followers, we included number of subordinates as a control variable (Rubin, Munz, & Bommer, 2005). A categorical response format was used which was coded as

follows: 1 shows a total of one subordinate; 2 shows the number of subordinates to be between one and five; 3 shows the number of subordinates to be between five and 10; 4 shows the number of subordinates to be between 10 and 30; and 5 shows the number of subordinates to be greater than 30.

## RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables in this study are reported in Table 2. As the table indicates, leader's narcissism correlates negatively with perceived leader effectiveness.

To test our hypotheses, all independent variables were centered around zero by subtracting their mean, and they were then multiplied to create interaction terms (e.g. Aiken & West, 1991). The results of these analyses are displayed in Table 3, where we entered control variables in Step 1, narcissism and gender variables in Step 2, the two-way interactions in Step 3, and the three-way interaction in step 4.

As expected, we found a significant interaction between leader's gender and leader's narcissism in relation to perceived leader effectiveness ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The shape of the interaction is shown in Figure 1, where we plotted regression lines for male and female leaders (Aiken & West, 1991). In line with Hypothesis 1, we find that leader's narcissism is negatively related to perceived leader effectiveness for female leaders ( $\beta = -.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and is not related to leader effectiveness for male leaders ( $\beta = -.02$ , *ns*). Thus, female narcissistic leaders are perceived as less effective than male narcissistic leaders.

In line with previous literature (Bowen et al., 2000; Eagly et al., 1995; Eagly et al., 1992), the interaction between leader's and subordinate's gender is also significant ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Separate regression lines for male and female leaders (cf. Aiken & West, 1991) showed female leaders to be rated as less effective by their male subordinates ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and no relationship between subordinate gender and perceived effectiveness for male leaders ( $\beta = .15$ , *ns*). Interestingly, we also found a significant interaction between subordinate's gender and leader's narcissism in relation to perceived leader effectiveness ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The nature of the interaction is depicted in Figure 2, where we plotted regression lines for male and female subordinates (Aiken & West, 1991). Leader's narcissism is significantly negatively related to perceived leader effectiveness as rated by male subordinates ( $\beta = -.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and is not related to leader effectiveness for female subordinates ( $\beta = .01$ , *ns*). Thus, male subordinates perceive leaders high on narcissism as less effective compared to female subordinates.

The three-way interaction between leader's and subordinate's gender and leader's narcissism was not significant ( $\beta = .02$ , *ns*). However, Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991) have argued that an omnibus interaction test is highly conservative and is not informative when the study involves more than two levels

TABLE 2  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables ( $N = 145$  dyads)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Leader age <sup>b</sup>	43.99	9.88									
2. Leader tenure	4.17	0.92	.44**								
3. Subordinate tenure	3.37	0.90	.07	.17*							
4. Leader-subordinate Tenure Gender Leader	3.83	1.03	.30**	.66**	.29**						
5. Total subordinates	3.26	1.15	.16*	-.02	.08	.10					
6. Leader gender	.54	.50	.01	.11	-.08	.07	.02				
7. Subordinate gender	.48	.50	-.07	-.07	.14*	.11	.19*	.05			
8. Leader narcissism	.42	.19	-.11	-.00	-.03	.02	-.04	.13	.17*	(.69)	
9. Leader effectiveness	5.06	0.97	-.06	.08	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.02	-.04	-.14*	(.88)

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ . All tests are one-tailed.

Figures in parentheses are Cronbach's alphas.

<sup>b</sup>  $N = 144$  dyads

Men are coded as 1, women are coded as 0. Tenure is coded as 1 when it is 3 months or less; 2 shows a tenure of between 3 and 6 months; 3 shows a tenure between 6 months and one year; 4 shows a tenure between 1 and 5 years; and 5 shows a tenure greater than 5 years.

Total number of subordinates coded as 1 when one subordinate; 2 shows the number of subordinates to be between one and five; 3 shows the number of subordinates to be between five and 10; 4 shows the number of subordinates to be between 10 and 30; and 5 shows the number of subordinates to be greater than 30.

TABLE 3  
Results of Moderated Regression Analyses for Leader's and Subordinate's Gender and Leader's Narcissism Explaining Leader Effectiveness

		<i>Leader effectiveness</i>			
		<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>	<i>Step 3</i>	<i>Step 4</i>
Step 1	Leader age	-.11	-.13	-.14	-.14
	Leader tenure	.13	.15	.16*	.16*
	Subordinate tenure	-.04	-.05	-.06	-.07
	Total subordinates	-.02	-.02	-.03	-.03
Step 2	Leader gender		-.02	-.02	-.02
	Subordinate gender		.00	-.00	-.00
	Leader narcissism		-.15*	-.13	-.14
Step 3	Leader gender × Sub. gender			.17*	.17*
	Leader gender × Leader narcissism			.16*	.16*
	Sub. gender × Leader narcissism			-.19*	-.19*
Step 4	Leader gender × Sub. gender × Leader narcissism				.02
	<i>F</i>	0.71	0.92	1.86*	1.68*
	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> / Adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.02/-.01	.05/-.01	.12/.06*	.12/.05*
	$\Delta F$	0.71	1.19	3.92**	0.06
	$\Delta R^2$	.02	.03	.08**	.00

Note: Standardised regression coefficients are shown.

\* *p* < .05; \*\* *p* < .01. All tests are one-tailed.

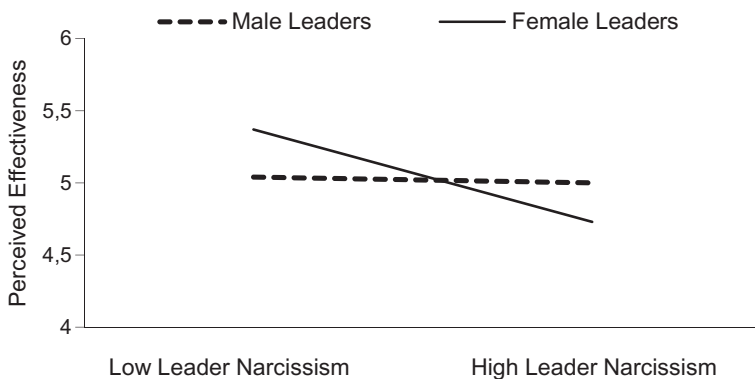


FIGURE 1. Perceived leader effectiveness as a function of leader's gender and leader's narcissism.

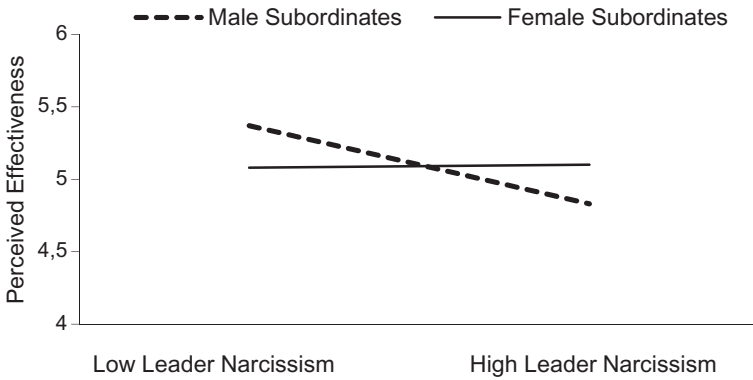


FIGURE 2. Perceived leader effectiveness as a function of subordinate's gender and leader's narcissism.

for one or more independent variables (as in the current case) (see also Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). Based on recommendations by Aiken (2003) and Aiken and West (1991), separate regression lines were plotted for each group irrespective of the statistical significance of the omnibus interaction test, given that a priori hypotheses were proposed. As seen in Figure 3, the results qualified the two-way interactions and revealed that leader's narcissism was negatively related to perceived effectiveness when female leaders were rated by male subordinates ( $\beta = -.60, p < .01, R^2 = .30, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .14$ ). No relationships between leader's narcissism and effectiveness were found when female leaders were rated by female subordinates ( $\beta = -.13, ns$ ), or when male leaders were rated by male ( $\beta = -.15, ns$ ) or female subordinates ( $\beta = .26, ns$ ). Thus, male subordinates perceive female leaders high in narcissism as less effective, while their ratings of male leaders seems less affected by the narcissism of their leader. Also, female subordinates show no (statistically significant) gender bias in their effectiveness evaluations of narcissistic leaders. Rather, when compared to male subordinates, they seem to rate female narcissistic leaders more favorably.

Finally, regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship between leader's gender and narcissism, controlling for leader's age and number of subordinates. In line with Hypothesis 3, we found that male leaders score significantly higher on narcissism than female leaders ( $\beta = -.14, p = .05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

In this study we identify leader's and follower's gender as moderators of the perceived effectiveness of narcissistic leaders. Our results show that female

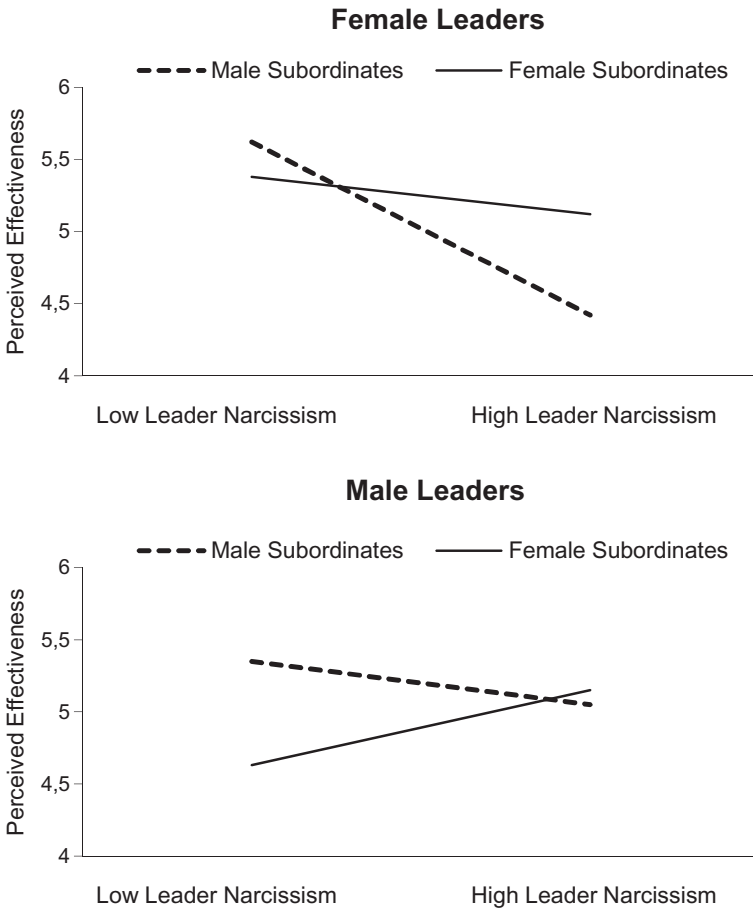


FIGURE 3. Perceived leader effectiveness as a function of leader’s and subordinate’s gender and leader’s narcissism.

narcissistic leaders are seen as less effective than male narcissistic leaders and that this especially occurs when male subordinates serve as raters. Female subordinates showed no gender bias in their effectiveness evaluations of narcissistic leaders. In fact, when compared to male subordinates, it seems that female subordinates evaluated narcissistic female leaders more favorably. Moreover, male subordinates do not seem to differentially evaluate their male leaders depending on the leader’s narcissism. Thus, in the eyes of male subordinates narcissistic traits such as being haughty, ruthless and arrogant seem unacceptable and ineffective when displayed by female

leaders, while such traits are allowed for male leaders. Effectiveness evaluations of female subordinates seem less negatively influenced by the narcissism of (female) leaders.

These findings link together the literature on narcissism (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011b), (the dark side of) leadership (e.g. Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Lord et al., 1984; Lord & Maher, 1991), and gender (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Koenig et al., 2011) by showing that leader's and follower's gender jointly determine the perceived effectiveness of narcissistic leaders. Our findings indicate that subordinates' perceptions of narcissistic leader effectiveness depend at least in part on what is socially expected and on accepted sex role behavior (Bowen et al., 2000; Eagly et al., 1992). When a female leader is narcissistic, she shows undesirable qualities associated with the other gender, and when she is rated by male subordinates she is evaluated (most) negatively. Female narcissistic leaders not only violate gender role expectations, but also gender status rules, which may be especially disruptive for men (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), resulting in lower effectiveness ratings of female narcissistic leaders by male subordinates.

We found leader narcissism, overall, to be negatively related to perceived leader effectiveness. However, the subsequent tests strongly suggest that this main effect might be an artifact of male subordinates rating female narcissistic leaders as less effective. Previous studies on the link between leader effectiveness and narcissism carried out in a real-world context, in which subordinates worked with their leaders on a daily basis for a longer time period, have also found negative relationships (Judge et al., 2006; Resick et al., 2009). Research that reported finding a positive relationship between leader narcissism and effectiveness was typically carried out in short-term groups such as those brought together in experimental settings (Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011b). Perhaps the narcissists' image of being a confident and effective leader works in the short term whereas in a real-world setting, over time, the undesirable characteristics of narcissism may be more obvious (Paulhus, 1998). Our study suggests that in the eyes of male subordinates these characteristics are then rated harshly for female leaders, while they are tolerated for male leaders.

Extending prior research on gender and leadership (e.g. Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008), our study reveals that leader's narcissism is important for understanding the perceived effectiveness of male and female leaders. Our findings suggest that when leading male subordinates, female leaders would be wise not to openly show narcissistic tendencies and should display leader characteristics that are more congruent with the female gender role. Such narcissistic tendencies are inconsistent with the prescriptive stereotype that women should be modest and warm, which can undermine their perceived effectiveness. These traits can be perceived as



threatening by men because they run contrary to traditional interaction patterns (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Our findings support and add to previous work suggesting that males are more likely to evaluate female leaders (see also Bowen et al., 2000; Eagly et al., 1995; Eagly et al., 1992) and especially female *narcissistic* leaders as less effective.

Our study also extends earlier literature on narcissism and gender by studying the link in the leadership domain. We show that, despite previous research suggesting that gender differences are less common in the leadership domain (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990), male leaders are indeed found to be more narcissistic than female leaders. This gender difference in narcissism serves male leaders well; they are seen as more effective compared to female leaders high in narcissism in the eyes of male subordinates.

Our findings are particularly relevant for human resource practices as research has shown that people's perceptions of effective leaders are not always accurate reflections of reality (Nevicka et al., 2011b). We find that male narcissistic leaders are more likely to incite impressions of effectiveness than female narcissistic leaders from male subordinates. Female narcissistic leaders are less likely to be evaluated negatively by female subordinates. Thus, both leader's and follower's gender affect perceptions of narcissistic leader effectiveness, and if organisations want to be assured that assessment of their leaders is accurate any ratings based on impressions should be corroborated with objective performance measures.

## Limitations, Future Directions, and Conclusion

A main strength of the present research is its use of multisource ratings in which leaders provide ratings of their personality and followers rate leader effectiveness. Thus, the relationships found cannot be explained by same source bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Leader's and follower's gender were based on self-reports, but such categorical variables are less susceptible to bias (Nunnally, 1978). However, as with all cross-sectional survey data, conclusions about the direction of causality cannot be tested.

Further, we studied the effectiveness of male and female narcissistic leaders in their natural work settings. In line with current reality in most Dutch organisations, the majority of the leaders in our sample were male, and of the female leaders a majority worked with female subordinates. The combination of female leader–male subordinate was a little less common (in our dataset this combination occurred in 30 out of 145 cases). The power to detect effects may therefore be somewhat reduced. This implies that this study may form a conservative test of our hypotheses. At the same time, it also means that the effects we did find need to be replicated in future research, in order to test

their robustness. For example, using data from a larger number of manager–subordinate dyads will permit more powerful hypothesis tests and control for other variables.

When studying managers, their time available for the research forms an important constraint. Managers are concerned with minimising interference with the completion of work-related tasks and are notoriously overburdened. Thus, we felt that it was important to minimise the time they would need to spend, and measured leader narcissism with the widely used short version of the NPI (NPI-16; Ames et al., 2006; see also Carlson et al., 2011; Goncalo et al., 2010; Konrath et al., 2009; Witt et al., 2010). This scale uses 16 rather than 40 items and is quicker to complete. Shorter scales can enhance the likelihood of participation in an overburdened group such as managers; however, short scales may also sacrifice breadth and reliability for efficiency (Credé, Harms, Niehorster, & Gaye-Valentine, 2012). While the short version with the 16 items seems to cover the full breadth of the trait, further replication of our results with the full 40-item scale is necessary.

In contrast to much of the previous research on the link between gender and leadership effectiveness, which has often relied on experimental research, participants in different organisations were rating their own leaders with whom they have day-to-day interactions. The richness of the real-world context may have brought along differences between our leader–subordinate dyads we did not control for. For example, existing group norms on leader prototypes may interact with gender to impact the extent to which male or female leaders are seen as effective (Hogg, 2001; Hogg, Fielding, Johnson, Masser, Russell, & Svensson, 2006). Research also shows that women in male-dominated organisations suffer from gender stereotypes to a greater extent than women from more neutral or female-dominated organisations (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Moreover, effectiveness ratings are likely to be affected by the likeability of the leader and are not necessarily objective indications of leader performance. To minimise alternative explanations for results, future research could incorporate more of the variables that the literature suggests affect (gender) differences in leadership perceptions.

Furthermore, we did not directly measure the mechanisms that we argue underlie the gender differences. It would thus also be valuable to more clearly pin down why the gender differences in the evaluation of male and female narcissistic leaders exist. Future research could, for example, include perceived leader behavior and gender role expectations to try to identify the specific mechanisms that underlie the gender differences found in this study. Also, given the literature on the link between narcissism and leader emergence (Brunell et al., 2008; Maccoby, 2000; Nevicka et al., 2011a; Paunonen et al., 2006) and research indicating that women at the upper level of the organisational hierarchy report possessing more agentic characteristics than

women at lower levels (Fagenson, 1990), it would also be interesting for future research to investigate whether female leaders score higher on narcissism compared to female followers.

Finally, despite the fact that narcissists' assertion of superiority is proposed to occur equally across gender, researchers have argued that the expression of narcissism may take different forms for men and women (see Philipson, 1985; Richman & Flaherty, 1990). Narcissistic women may be more likely to assert their felt superiority through subtler, indirect means that better conform to expectations of their sex role (Jørstad, 1996; Lim & Teo, 2009; Lim, Teo, & Chin, 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Pullen and Rhodes (2008), for example, describe a narcissistic leader who took on a role of servility in order to impress others by service, seeking not only their admiration but also their liking and respect (i.e. characteristic of high communal self-enhancement). Such communal narcissistic behavior would make violation of the sex and status role by female narcissistic leaders, and subsequent negative evaluations by male subordinates, less likely. Identifying gender differences in the expression of narcissism by male and female leaders is a fruitful road for further research.

Despite its limitations, this study contributes to enhancing the understanding of the effectiveness of male and female narcissistic leaders. Previous research on narcissistic leader evaluations has been inconsistent (e.g. Judge et al., 2006). Our findings suggest that male subordinates rate female narcissistic leaders as less effective, while female subordinates show no gender bias in their effectiveness ratings of narcissistic leaders and, when compared to male subordinates, they evaluate female leaders high in narcissism more favorably. Male subordinates only seem affected by narcissism when this is shown by female leaders, they do not seem affected by narcissism of male leaders. Thus, gender differences form a potential source of inconsistencies found in ratings of effectiveness of narcissistic leaders.

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