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Status incongruence and supervisor gender as moderators of the transformational leadership to subordinate affective organizational commitment relationship

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## Abstract

Grounded in role congruity theory, we examine how status incongruence (when the subordinate is older, has more education, work experience, and/or organizational tenure than the supervisor) in subordinate-supervisor dyads affects transformational leaders' ability to foster affective organizational commitment among their subordinates. Across two field studies, our findings show that the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment is less positive when status incongruence is high. Furthermore, in both field studies we found a three-way interaction among transformational leadership, status incongruence, and supervisor gender predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment. Specifically, in Study 1 (pink-collar employees in Turkey), low status incongruence strengthened the positive relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment for male leaders. In Study 2 (pink-collar employees in the U.S.), low status incongruence strengthened the positive relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment for female leaders. Furthermore, Study 2 also revealed that collective identity was a mediator of both the significant two and three-way interaction effects on subordinate affective organizational commitment.

*Keywords:* status incongruence, gender, transformational leadership, organizational commitment, diversity

Status incongruence and supervisor gender as moderators of the transformational leadership to subordinate affective organizational commitment relationship

Transformational leadership is the form of leadership that not only has a strong positive relationship with leader effectiveness (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996) but also enjoys a reputation as “the *most* effective form of leadership” (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013, p. 2). Transformational leadership inspires subordinates to work for the good of the organization by motivating them through the leader’s strategic vision, communication of the vision, and commitment toward the vision (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1995; McShane & Von Glinow, 2000). Research shows that transformational leadership positively impacts affective organizational commitment (an employee’s emotional attachment to an organization; Allen & Meyer, 1990, 1996) across a variety of organizational settings and cultures (Bono & Judge, 2003; Judge & Piccolo 2004; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). However, less is known about how and why transformational leadership is associated with affective organizational commitment. We answer a call to test the moderators and mediators influencing the effects of transformational leadership on its outcomes (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). We make several research contributions.

First, we examine how status incongruence affects the level of subordinate affective organizational commitment generated from transformational leadership. Consistent with prior research (Jarmon, 1976; Hirschfeld & Thomas, 2011; Perry, Kulik, & Zhou, 1999), we define status incongruence as a situation where traditional characteristics associated with the leader and subordinate roles are reversed. For instance, situations where the supervisor is younger than the subordinate, has less education than the subordinate, has less work experience, or has less organizational tenure than the subordinate all represent facets of status incongruence. In the

absence of status incongruence, there would be status *congruence* in accordance with the traditional roles. Henceforth, we refer to low status incongruence and high status incongruence to reflect degrees of status incongruence. This topic is important, because although it is becoming more common for older workers to report to younger supervisors, status incongruence research shows that older workers expect less from younger supervisors than do younger workers (Collins, Hair, & Rocco, 2009). Furthermore, the demographics of the workplace are changing with respect to age. Employees are working longer and retiring later due to increased longevity and financial necessity, which means that the variation in age has increased in the workforce (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011). We propose that other forms of incongruence such as tenure, work experience, education, and other credentials are also increasingly common as a result. Thus, it behooves us to know more about dissimilarity and the impact of leadership styles when status incongruence exists in demographically diverse settings.

Second, we shed light on the joint moderating effects of transformational leadership style, status incongruence between the supervisor and subordinate, and the supervisor's gender as predictors of subordinate affective commitment to the organization. The research findings are not clear with respect to how men and women lead in incongruent situations, meaning, for example, they are the younger and less experienced supervisor with older more seasoned subordinates, or they have less education or organizational tenure than their subordinates. The present study examines how male and female transformational leaders are able to instill organizational commitment in their followers depending upon their gender and whether or not they are in situations of status incongruence with their followers. Theoretically, we rely on role congruity theory (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Heilman, 2001) to explain how employee organizational commitment unfolds for

male and female transformational leaders depending on whether they have a status incongruence situation with their subordinates. Role congruity theory states that female leaders are often evaluated less favorably than male leaders. Female leaders face challenges because they sometimes face conflicting demands between the female gender role (predominantly communal qualities) and the leader role (predominantly agentic qualities). Therefore, gender roles have different implications for male and female leaders with respect to the way people expect them to behave and how they are able to succeed as a leader (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Third, in Study 2 we theorize and test the mediating role of collective identity with one's work group (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002) in transmitting the interactive effects of transformational leadership, status incongruence, and supervisor gender to affective organizational commitment. A few conceptual studies have theorized that transformational leader behaviors influence subordinates to see themselves as part of the group, which encourages them to work toward the team's common goals (Lord & Brown, 2004; Shamir et al., 1993; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). For example, Shamir et al. (1993) theorized that transformational leadership promotes social identification in followers which compels them to work for their organization. We empirically test these conceptual arguments.

We examine our research questions within pink-collar occupations (i.e., predominantly female settings). While several studies have examined the experiences of women who are in token or minority proportions in organizational leadership roles (Kanter, 1977; Zelechowski & Bilimoria, 2001, 2003, 2004), and women's propensity to join leadership roles such as boards of directors (Bilimoria & Piderit, 1994; Hillman, Cannella, & Harris, 2003; Hillman, Shropshire, & Cannella, 2007), less is known about either women or men in pink-collar occupations. Discrepant findings exist in this area of study. For example, majority leaders who are numerical

minorities in the workplace (e.g., male leaders in a predominantly female workplace) elicit different reactions in different studies. In some studies, males in predominantly female settings seem to thrive and ride the glass escalator to the top faster than women (Hultin, 2003; Williams, 1992). In other studies, men in predominantly female settings report less job satisfaction (Young & James, 2001). What may cause these different outcomes for men? Likewise, what we know about the success of women leaders is also unclear and seems contextually driven. Some women leaders thrive and obtain a leadership advantage when their credentials are impeccable (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Other women leaders are evaluated more negatively than men due to double standards favoring men (Castilla, 2012; Foschi, 1996, 2000). We shed light on this topic.

From a practical standpoint, this study is noteworthy because transformational leaders inspire their subordinates to transcend their self-interests for the good of the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Thus, transformational leadership can do much good in organizations and it is helpful to understand how both female and male transformational leaders can inspire organizational commitment in subordinates in low versus high status incongruent settings and identify the challenges they may face in today's diverse workforce. It is also important to examine how subordinates respond to both male and female leaders, because there are leaders of both genders in the workforce. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), 51.39% of management, professional, and related occupations were held by women in 2013. Although a meta-analysis of gender and perceptions of leader effectiveness shows that men and women leaders do not differ in perceived leader effectiveness (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014), a different meta-analysis revealed that the "think manager think male" paradigm still persists (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). People still tend to associate leadership with men and masculine characteristics (Koenig et al., 2011). These findings lead us to conclude

that more work is needed to understand the contexts in which men and women leaders thrive and elicit affective organizational commitment from followers.

### **Theory and Hypotheses**

#### **Transformational Leadership and Subordinate Affective Organizational Commitment**

Transformational leaders provide a strategic vision, communicate that vision, model the vision consistently through their actions, and develop commitment toward the vision (Avolio, 1999; McShane & Von Glinow, 2000). Transformational leaders inspire followers to achieve great outcomes by providing meaning and understanding toward the vision. They align the goals of their followers with those of the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

More relevant to the current study, there is evidence suggesting that transformational leadership positively relates to affective organizational commitment (an employee's emotional attachment to an organization; Allen and Meyer, 1990, 1996). This is empirical evidence across a variety of organizational contexts and national cultures (Bono & Judge, 2003; Judge & Piccolo 2004; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). For example, Shamir and colleagues (Shamir et al., 1993; Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998) propose that transformational leaders influence followers' organizational commitment by encouraging high intrinsic value through goal accomplishment, emphasizing the connection between subordinate effort and goal achievement, and by achieving a high level of leader and follower commitment to a common vision. Because the positive link between transformational leadership and follower affective organizational commitment is well documented, we focus below on how this relationship is negatively moderated.

#### **The Moderating Effect of Status Incongruence**

We study status incongruence on the basis of age, tenure, education, and work

experience. Research shows that older people tend to have more status and social power than younger people (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Also, tenure, education, and work experience are the basic building blocks of a resume that would be used to categorize people into positions in organizations (SHRM, 2014). Finding incongruence in one or more of these dimensions with one's manager is likely to lower subordinate expectations and can affect one's commitment.

Research implies that status incongruence is an important variable which could influence subordinates' reactions to leaders. Only a few papers have explicitly tested age incongruence between supervisors and subordinates, in which the supervisor is the younger party. Collins et al. (2009) found that older subordinates have low expectations from their younger supervisor compared to younger subordinates. Some studies have reported that older employees are reluctant to take instructions from supervisors who are younger than they are (Hirsch, 1990; Shellenbarger & Hymowitz, 1994). Likewise, sometimes younger supervisors are uncomfortable giving orders to subordinates who are older than they are (Hirsch, 1990). Perry et al. (1999) suggest that younger supervisors with older subordinates could contradict age norms (Lawrence, 1996) which imply that the older, more experienced people should typically manage the younger, less experienced ones. Perry et al. (1999) found some evidence that age status incongruence between supervisors and subordinates was problematic and some evidence that it was not. They found that older subordinates reporting to younger supervisors were more likely to engage in work change behavior, or "adaptive behavior which is motivated by negative work affect" (Perry et al. 1999, p. 347). However, they were also more likely to engage in citizenship behavior. Perry et al. (1999) speculated that perhaps older workers engaged in more citizenship if they felt it necessary to compensate for their lower level of training and knowledge compared to their younger supervisors. In sum, the majority of the evidence on age status incongruence between

subordinates and supervisors indicates that tension is a probable outcome of status incongruence.

In this study, we go beyond the existing literature measuring status incongruence on the basis of age, and we examine how transformational leaders are able to endure situations where they experience broader status incongruence issues that could be attributable to age, education, work experience, and/or organizational tenure. Norms about who should lead and who should follow generally predict that those with greater age, education, work experience, and organizational tenure should lead (Lawrence, 1996). However, given the diversity in today's workforce, these variables do not always track together. Leaders of supervisor-subordinate pairs may experience status incongruence on different dimensions. For example, a younger supervisor may have more education than an older subordinate, but the older subordinate may have more work experience and organizational tenure than the younger supervisor.

We propose that such status incongruence issues between supervisors and subordinates will erode the positive effect of supervisor transformational leadership on subordinate affective organizational commitment. Such a reduction in affective organizational commitment should not happen with low status incongruence between the supervisor and subordinate. Role congruity theory (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 1992; Heilman, 2001) predicts that the higher status person (i.e., the one with more experience, education, tenure, and age) should be the leader. This reasoning is consistent with typical age norms observed in organizations (Dannefer, 2003; Lawrence, 1996). When subordinates are in a high status incongruence situation, they feel like something is a misfit and can become dissatisfied and exhibit lower affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990, 1996; Herrbach, 2006). These feelings of misfit are much less likely to occur when there is low status incongruence between the supervisor and subordinate, because their status characteristics fit the typical pattern.

When there is low status incongruence between the supervisor and subordinate, we do not expect a reduction in the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment. In this circumstance, the parties involved are congruent with traditional social status stereotypes, and therefore, role congruity theory (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 1992) would predict no reduction in the transformational leadership to subordinate affective organizational commitment relationship. However, when there is high status incongruence, role congruity theory would predict less identification between the subordinate and the supervisor. In such instances, the positive transformational leadership effects on subordinate affective organizational commitment should be weakened by status incongruence. We propose the following.

*Hypothesis 1: Status incongruence will moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment such that the relationship will be less positive when status incongruence is high than when it is low.*

### **The Moderating Effect of Supervisor Gender**

We also examine how male and female transformational leaders are able to withstand status incongruence situations between themselves and subordinates. Gender roles specify that women should be empathetic, kind, emotional, concerned, helpful, and relationship-focused (Abele, 2003; Fiske & Stevens, 1993; Heilman, 2001). These same sources would say that men are stereotypically aggressive, decisive, achievement oriented, and competent. The way men and women are treated can also depend upon their credentials.

Most gender research (particularly the work of Heilman and colleagues) would say that having ambiguous credentials would penalize women more than men. Heilman and coauthors (Heilman, Block, & Lucas, 1992; Heilman, Block, & Stathatos, 1997) discovered that women

who were perceived as benefitting from affirmative action were seen as less competent by their coworkers (called the stigma of incompetence). Heilman et al. (1997) found that the stigma of incompetence was mitigated when the organization provided unambiguous information about the women's credentials. We know that having unambiguously strong credentials helps women avoid being stigmatized to some degree. Therefore, when there is low status incongruence between a female leader and her subordinates, the leader's credentials are unambiguous, and we would expect this to help those transformational leaders somewhat in obtaining subordinate affective organizational commitment. However, high status incongruence seems to impede favorable perceptions about women's credentials.

If there is a status incongruence issue between female leaders and their subordinates, being transformational leaders might help them make up for that and build commitment among followers. Nonetheless, because women are expected to be more caring and relationship-oriented, which overlap with the characteristics of transformational leadership, such leadership behaviors may be less impactful on others when performed by a female leader (compared to a male leader) in high status incongruence situations. If transformational leader behaviors are consistent with stereotypical female behavior, then those behaviors should be less salient. This may explain why females receive less recognition than males for performing organizational citizenship behavior, which is consistent with stereotypes about women being kind (e.g., Allen & Rush, 2001). In a study about altruistic helping behavior performed by men and women, Heilman and Chen (2005) found that when men and women both performed helpful behaviors, men were rated significantly higher in performance evaluations and reward recommendations than women. When the men and women did not perform altruistic helping behavior, men were still rated significantly higher on both performance and reward recommendations than women.

Research further suggests that women leaders place value on fostering relationships with their subordinates. However, this focus has not been considered as “real” work, being relegated to things expected from women (Fletcher, Jordan, & Miller 2000). In fact, female supervisors are regarded as less competent than male supervisors when providing criticism to their subordinates (Sinclair & Kunda, 2000). Stereotypes that portray women as less capable leaders than men still persist (Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Oakley, 2000), and these notions make it more difficult for women to obtain a leadership advantage from transformational leadership, particularly when they have high status incongruence with their subordinates. This research agrees with role congruity theory (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 1992; Heilman, 2001) which states that women leaders are generally evaluated less favorably than men leaders.

With respect to male transformational leaders, research suggests that men will fare better both when there is and when there is not ambiguity about their credentials, because they are the dominant sex in society and people may assume they are capable (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995; Glicke & Fiske, 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Nevertheless, status incongruence should have at least some detrimental effect on male transformational leaders’ ability to obtain subordinate affective organizational commitment. Men are presumed to be competent and role congruity theory would state that people will respond badly to male leaders who are seen as less than competent. In fact, status incongruence could be more threatening for male leaders because males are expected to be competent (Heilman, 2001). Incompetence violates the descriptive stereotype for males and should therefore carry more of a stigma. However, Foschi (2000) also proposes that minority group members (who have lower social status) will have their successful performance scrutinized more than majority group members (who have higher social status).

When high status group members fail, they will be scrutinized to a lesser degree than lower status group members would be. “The higher the status, the more convincing the demonstration of *incompetence* will have to be” (Foschi, 2000, p. 25) for the high status group member to be penalized. This would explain why male leaders are evaluated better than female leaders, as role congruity theory suggests. If men get the benefit of the doubt, they can display more incompetence before incurring the penalties likely to be imposed on their female counterparts.

Although role congruity theory would predict that people give males the benefit of the doubt because leadership is stereotypically associated with masculine traits (Koenig et al., 2011), having relatively weaker credentials compared to their subordinates (i.e., less education, age, work experience, organizational tenure), could penalize men somewhat. In such a situation, being a transformational leader should not benefit the males much, because even if they exhibit sympathy, caring, and good relationships with subordinates (which should be valued), they are violating the masculine expectation to be competent (Heilman, 2001).

In sum, because some transformational leadership behaviors enacted by women may be overlooked by others, we suggest, based on role congruity theory, that high status incongruence will have a more detrimental effect on female transformational leaders compared to male transformational leaders. High status incongruence will weaken the transformational leadership to subordinates’ affective commitment relationship for women. Furthermore, per role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001), low status incongruence should benefit male transformational leaders and strengthen the transformational leadership to subordinates’ affective organizational commitment relationship for them.

*Hypothesis 2: There will be a three-way interaction among transformational leadership, status incongruence, and supervisor gender on subordinate affective organizational commitment.*

*High status incongruence will weaken the positive relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment for women whereas low status incongruence will strengthen the positive relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment for men.*

## **Method**

### **Study 1**

#### **Sample and Procedures**

Participants were employees of a large hospital in a major city in eastern Turkey. Questionnaires were provided to subordinates and their supervisors with a letter explaining the purpose of the study, assuring confidentiality, and informing them that participation was voluntary. The original survey, written in English, was translated into Turkish by a bilingual speaker and then translated back into English by another bilingual speaker to ensure survey equivalence (Brislin, 1980). To develop and validate the survey, we requested four Turkish management scholars and three hospital CEOs to review our survey. Per their feedback, we edited the questionnaire and pre-tested the new version on 65 executive master of business administration students to confirm the reliability of the measures. Supervisors were asked to provide their education, work experience, and organizational tenure. The subordinate questionnaire included questions about employee demographics, supervisor gender and age, supervisor leadership style, and subordinate affective organizational commitment.

We asked key hospital administrators (e.g., unit director, human resources director, and chief operating officer) for help identifying and recruiting supervisor-subordinate dyads. The human resources department provided a list of subordinates and their supervisors. One human resources representative was our primary contact and sent the e-mail to potential participants to

request their participation. This person distributed the surveys to employee mailboxes. We asked employees interested in completing the survey to attend a session with one of the authors after their work shift. One month after survey administration, the human resources contact sent reminder postcards to subordinates and supervisors who had not returned the surveys.

To match subordinate and supervisor surveys, we had subordinates place a six-digit code consisting of at least two letters and two numbers on their survey and to give this code to their supervisor so he/she could put the code on the supervisor survey. Participants kept their answers anonymous by not sharing their six-digit code with anyone other than their supervisor. Subordinates returned their surveys directly to the research team in stamped, preaddressed envelopes. Supervisors placed their surveys in an envelope, sealed it, signed the six-digit code across the seal, and mailed it to the researchers. The subordinate survey contained questions about supervisor transformational leadership, subordinate affective organizational commitment, and demographics including subordinate and supervisor gender and age, and the subordinate's highest education degree, years of total work experience, and years of organizational tenure. The supervisor survey contained questions about their highest education degree, the number of employees that reported to them, their years of total work experience, and their years of organizational tenure.

The surveys were submitted to 220 subordinates and their corresponding 28 supervisors. Twenty-three supervisor surveys and 184 subordinate surveys were returned, for response rates of 82.1% and 83.6%. After we removed unmatched supervisor-subordinate pairs and missing cases, 170 supervisor-subordinate dyads (170 subordinates and 23 supervisors) were matched and returned the surveys. We reviewed the data for missing values and found that seven participants had one missing value on one multi-item scale but otherwise fully completed the

survey. Therefore, we computed the scales for these participants with all the data they provided. We checked for non-response bias using employee records from the hospital. We did not find any significant differences between respondents and non-respondents on gender, age, years of education, or organizational tenure for either supervisors or subordinates. Of the subordinates, 75% were female. Participants were 31 years old on average ( $SD = 5.92$ ), had an average organizational tenure of 2.53 years ( $SD = 4.08$ ), and an average of 10.52 years of work experience ( $SD = 15.12$ ). Of the supervisors, 71% percent were female. Their average age was 34 years ( $SD = 4.11$ ), the average reported organizational tenure was 4.28 years ( $SD = 3.44$ ), and the average total work experience was 12.43 years ( $SD = 5.60$ ).

### **Criterion**

*Subordinate affective organizational commitment.* We used the six-item affective commitment scale developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). A sample item is, "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." The items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The scale reliability was  $\alpha = .93$ .

### **Predictors**

*Supervisor transformational leadership.* We used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Form 5X-Short) scale developed by Bass and Avolio (1989; 1995) which includes 20 items that measure charisma, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. A sample item is, "How often does your supervisor articulate a compelling vision?" The items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *never* to 7 = *always*). Reliability for the entire scale was  $\alpha = .98$ . We conducted supplemental analyses to check whether the results presented below would differ

depending on the different factors of transformational leadership. All five factors replicated the same statistically significant results and pattern, indicating that they all behave similarly.

Therefore, we present one measure of transformational leadership here for simplicity, as has been done by others using the same scale in past research (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003).

*Status incongruence (between subordinate and supervisor)*. Following the status incongruence measures published in Perry et al. (1999), Jarmon (1976), and Lundberg, Kristenson, and Starrin (2009), we first determined whether there was a status incongruence between the supervisor and subordinate on the basis of age, education, work experience, or organizational tenure. Subordinate age was measured in years as a continuous variable on the employee survey. Supervisor age was also measured in years on the employee survey. We asked employees to estimate their supervisor's age. Employee education was measured on the subordinate survey in a question that asked them to rate their highest education degree received. The same question was asked on the supervisor survey which is how we determined supervisor education. Education was coded (1 = *high school*, 2 = *associate degree*, 3 = *bachelor's degree*, 4 = *graduate degree*). The subordinate and supervisor reported their own years of work experience and organizational tenure on their respective surveys, recorded as a continuous number. Following Perry et al. (1999) and Jarmon (1976), we calculated the supervisor credentials (age, education, work experience, or organizational tenure) minus the subordinate credentials for each variable. This resulted in four calculations, one for age, one for education, one for work experience, and one for organizational tenure. Negative results indicate that the subordinate has greater credentials than the supervisor on that variable. Then, following Jarmon (1976), we dummy coded each of the four resulting calculations (coded as 1 = *high status incongruence* or 0

= *low status incongruence*) to create four indicators of status incongruence. Finally, we added these four incongruence indicators together to create an overall measure of status incongruence between the supervisor and subordinate, ranging from 0 to 4.

***Supervisor gender.*** This was measured with one statement on the subordinate survey which asked participants to state whether their supervisor was male or female. This variable was coded 0 = *male supervisor*, 1 = *female supervisor*.

### **Analyses and Results**

Because we collected multiple measures from the employees, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in LISREL (8.80) to establish the discriminant validity of the scales. A two-factor solution (affective organizational commitment, supervisor transformational leadership) was a good fit for the data ( $\chi^2 = 944.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $df = 298$ , CFI = .96, IFI = .96, SRMR = .05; Kline 2005). A two-factor solution was a better fit to the data than a one-factor solution ( $\chi^2 = 1594.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $df = 299$ , CFI = .92, IFI = .92, SRMR = .14;  $\Delta \chi^2 = 650.62$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Table 1 contains means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations. To test our hypotheses, we used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Hofmann, 1997). Because multiple employees reported to the same supervisor, the data are nested and the supervisors may account for some of the variance in subordinate affective organizational commitment. If this is the case, then the independence of observations assumption in ordinary least squares regression would be violated. Therefore, we conducted our analyses in HLM to account for this. We ran a series of models in HLM, the first of which was an intercept only model to determine whether the supervisor accounted for a significant amount of variance in employee affective organizational commitment. The results showed that the supervisor accounts

for 10.04% of the variance in employee affective organizational commitment ( $\chi^2 = 39.53, df = 22, p < .05$ ). Therefore, we tested our hypotheses using HLM.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that status incongruence will moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment such that the relationship will be less positive when status incongruence is high than when it is low. Model 2 of Table 2 shows an interaction effect between supervisor transformational leadership and status incongruence predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment,  $\gamma_{30} = -.19, t = -2.13, p < .05$ . We computed a Pseudo R squared (Arnold, 1992) to determine the Level 1 variance explained by the predictor. The interaction term explained an additional 10.57% of the Level 1 variance beyond the main effects ( $\Delta \chi^2 = -18.35, df = 3, p < .01$ ) which is substantial for interaction terms (McClelland & Judd, 1993). We plotted this interaction as suggested by Aiken and West (1991). As shown in Figure 1, the relationship between supervisor transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment is less positive when status incongruence is high ( $b = -.15, t = -1.24, p > .05$ ) than when it is low ( $b = .11, t = 1.06, p > .05$ ). This supports Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a three-way interaction among transformational leadership, status incongruence, and supervisor gender on subordinate affective organizational commitment. High status incongruence will weaken the positive relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment for women whereas low status incongruence will strengthen the positive relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment for men. Model 3 of Table 2 shows that the three-way interaction is positive and significant,  $\gamma_{31} = .61, t = 7.52, p < .01$ . It explained an additional 5.35% of the Level 1 variance ( $\Delta \chi^2 = -6.88, df = 1, p < .01$ ) representing a substantial

interaction effect (McClelland & Judd, 1993). We plotted the interaction according to Aiken and West (1991) and Dawson and Richter (2006). As shown in Figure 2, the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment for male leaders is positive and significant when there is low status incongruence ( $b = .42, t = 2.34, p < .05$ ) but that is not the case for male leaders with high status incongruence ( $b = -.18, t = 1.32, p > .05$ ). These two lines are significantly different from one another ( $t = -10.40, p < .01$ ). This supports the prediction in Hypothesis 2 that low status incongruence will strengthen the transformational leadership to subordinate affective organizational commitment relationship for male leaders.

Under conditions of high status incongruence, the slope of the line for female leaders is positive and not significant ( $b = .04, t = .27, p > .05$ ) while the slope of the line for female leaders is negative and not significant under conditions of low status incongruence ( $b = -.05, t = -.38, p > .05$ ). These two lines are not significantly different from one another ( $t = .92, p > .05$ ). This does not provide support for the prediction that high status incongruence will weaken the transformational leadership to subordinate affective organizational commitment relationship for female leaders. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

### **Study 1 Discussion**

The relationship between supervisor transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment becomes somewhat less positive when status incongruence is high. Further, for female leaders, transformational leadership has no effect on subordinate affective organizational commitment, which was somewhat high even when they had high status incongruence. For male leaders, if they have high status incongruence, transformational leadership has no effect on affective organizational commitment. Male transformational leaders

with low status incongruence elicited higher affective organizational commitment from subordinates than all other leaders. Female transformational leaders with low status incongruence elicited the lowest affective organizational commitment from subordinates.

This suggests two things. First, there was generally a preference for male transformational leaders in this Turkish sample. It is interesting to note that transformational leadership made no significant difference for the female transformational leaders and that female transformational leaders with high status incongruence elicited more subordinate affective organizational commitment than female transformational leaders with low status incongruence. Second, even males with low status incongruence with their subordinates experience a loss in subordinate affective organizational commitment if they are not transformational leaders, possibly because they may be seen as cold or lacking in the caring aspects that are valued in a predominantly female setting. This may especially be true in a hospital setting where the goal is to care for people. Instead, when men are transformational leaders and have strong credentials relative to their subordinates, they elicit more affective organizational commitment from followers than any other leaders. This is possibly because they are seen as competent, which is consistent with male stereotypes, but they are also seen as caring which is a positive role deviation for men (Wang, Chiang, Tsai, Lin, & Cheng, 2013) and results in gains of subordinate affective organizational commitment.

As with most field studies, findings will generalize best to similar types of organizations. We are unsure how the results of this study, based in a hospital setting, will generalize to other settings. Therefore, we sought to examine the generalizability of our findings by collecting data from the United States (U.S.). We would expect to find results in a U.S. pink-collar setting, although results may differ due to cultural differences between the two countries.

## Study 2

This study sought to replicate the findings from Study 1 in a pink-collar setting in the U.S. to examine generalizability and to extend the findings by testing the role of collective identity as a potential mediator of the two- and three-way interactions found in Study 1.

Self-concept theories of transformational leadership suggest that transformational leader behavior causes subordinates to view themselves as group members and, therefore, pursue the shared goals of the team (Lord & Brown, 2004; Shamir et al., 1993; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Shamir et al. (1993) explain that transformational leadership spurs subordinates to view themselves as group members rather than independent entities. However, the authors also emphasize that role identities are critical factors to consider for a subordinate to truly feel they are part of the collective, which is key for transformational leadership to be effective. We posit that status incongruence hinders such a collective identity for a subordinate.

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the self-concept encompasses salient group classifications. We believe high status incongruence represents a case where a follower's classification (i.e., more age, education, work experience, and/or organizational tenure than the supervisor) will cause a reduction in the relationship between supervisor transformational leadership and social identification with their supervisor's team, which ultimately influences commitment with the organization at large. A subordinate working in a status incongruent context is less likely to develop the unconditional commitment--internalized "personal" or "moral" commitment--that Shamir and colleagues (1993) describe. This is a circumstance when a subordinate believes that low status incongruence is normal but finds their reality to be such that they are in a supervisor-subordinate relationship where status incongruence exists. Therefore, the transformational leadership to collective identity relationship

will be weaker when there is high status incongruence, and as a result, transformational leadership will be less positively related to subordinate affective organizational commitment.

Van Knippenberg et al. (2004) drew a similar conclusion in their review of leadership and suggested that follower self-construal of identity may mediate the effects between leader behavior and follower behavior. The interactive effects of transformational leadership and status incongruence on subordinate affective organizational commitment should, therefore, be transmitted through subordinate collective identity. Furthermore, these mediating effects may also differ depending upon supervisor gender because role congruity theory and gender bias research describe that biases against women can hold women to higher standards than men and undermine their ability to lead (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). We propose that both our two- and three-way interactive effects will influence collective identity, which in turn, influences subordinate affective organizational commitment. The link between collective identity and affective organizational commitment has been established both theoretically (Johnson, Chang, & Yang, 2010) and empirically (Johnson & Chang, 2006) because people who have positive feelings about membership in their work group also tend to be emotionally committed to their organization as a whole. Therefore, we present the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 3: Collective identity mediates the two-way interaction effect between transformational leadership and status incongruence on subordinate affective organizational commitment.*

*Hypothesis 4: Collective identity mediates the three-way interaction effect between transformational leadership, status incongruence, and supervisor gender on subordinate affective organizational commitment.*

## **Sample and Procedures**

We contracted with Qualtrics to sample U.S. employees in pink-collar settings. Qualtrics maintains a national panel with over 250,000 individuals who registered to take surveys. We worked with Qualtrics to randomly select people from their panel and develop pre-screening questions to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria for our study. We used the following four filter questions: “Are you at least 18 years of age?”, “Are you currently employed?”, “Do you work in a position where you report to a supervisor?”, and “Do you work in an organization where the majority of employees are women? or Do you work in one of the following occupations: babysitter/day care worker, counselor, counter attendant, dental assistant/medical assistant, dental hygienist, flight attendant, food preparation worker, hotel housekeeper, library assistant, librarian, maid/domestic worker, massage therapist, nurse, preschool teacher, receptionist/secretary/administrative assistant, retail worker, social worker, waiter/waitress/host/hostess”. These occupations were taken from the list of pink-collar jobs compiled by news sources in the U.S. (Francis, 2014; Sardi, 2012). Participants had to be employed adults working for a supervisor and in a pink-collar setting to be eligible for the study.

The prescreening process resulted in 522 people who were willing and eligible to participate in our study about their workplace. Of these, 279 provided complete responses on the variables included in this investigation. Participants were 67% female. On average, they were 47 years old ( $SD = 14.81$ ), had an organizational tenure of 9.23 years ( $SD = 7.31$ ), and 24.70 years of work experience ( $SD = 14.21$ ). Most participants (63%) had a female supervisor and estimated that, on average, their supervisors were 48 years old ( $SD = 11.41$ ), had 14 years of organizational tenure ( $SD = 9.19$ ), and 24.34 years of total work experience ( $SD = 11.57$ ). Participants worked in many industries: retail trade (27%), health care (17%), education (10%), food services (7%), other services (5%), finance and insurance (3%), professional, scientific, and technical services

(3%), transportation and warehousing (2%), information (2%), manufacturing (1%), construction (1%), wholesale trade (1%), and others (21%).

### **Criterion**

*Subordinate affective organizational commitment.* We used the same scale from Study 1 developed by Meyer et al. (1993). The items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The scale reliability was  $\alpha = .93$ .

### **Predictors**

*Supervisor transformational leadership.* We used the scale from Study 1 developed by Bass and Avolio (1989). The items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *never* to 7 = *always*). The scale reliability was  $\alpha = .98$ .

*Status incongruence (between subordinate and supervisor).* We used the same measure from Study 1, which follows the status incongruence measures published in Perry et al. (1999), Jarmon (1976), and Lundberg et al. (2009). Please refer to Study 1 for a full description of this measure and its calculation.

*Supervisor gender.* This was measured with one item on the subordinate survey. This variable was coded 0 = *male supervisor*, 1 = *female supervisor*.

### **Mediator**

*Collective identity.* We used De Cremer and van Knippenberg's (2002) three-item measure of work group identity assessed on a scale from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much so*. A sample item is "Do you identify with your group?" The reliability for the scale was  $\alpha = .97$ .

## **Analyses and Results**

We ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in LISREL to establish the discriminant validity of the scales. A three-factor solution (affective commitment to the organization,

supervisor transformational leadership, collective identity) was a good fit for the data ( $\chi^2 = 1413.32, p < .05, df = 374, CFI = .97, IFI = .97, SRMR = .05$ ; Kline 2005). A three-factor solution was a better fit to the data than a two-factor solution with affective commitment to the organization and supervisor transformational leadership loaded onto one factor ( $\chi^2 = 2551.94, p < .01, df = 376, CFI = .93, IFI = .93, SRMR = .11$ ;  $\Delta \chi^2 = 1138.62, df = 2, p < .05$ ). A three-factor solution was also a better fit to the data than a one-factor solution ( $\chi^2 = 3442.13, p < .01, df = 377, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, SRMR = .12$ ;  $\Delta \chi^2 = 2028.81, df = 3, p < .05$ ).

Table 3 contains means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for Study 2. To test our hypotheses, we used moderated hierarchical linear regression. Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be an interaction effect of transformational leadership and status incongruence predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment. Model 3 of Table 4 shows that the relationship between supervisor transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment is negatively moderated by status incongruence,  $\beta = -.11, p < .05$ . The interaction term explained 2% of the variance in subordinate affective organizational commitment which is common for two-way interactions (McClelland & Judd, 1993). We plotted this interaction as suggested by Aiken and West (1991). As shown in Figure 3, the relationship between supervisor transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment is positive and statistically significant when there is low status incongruence ( $b = 1.02, t = 10.43, p < .01$ ) and it is positive (but less so) and statistically significant when there is high status incongruence ( $b = .71, t = 7.28, p < .05$ ). This supports Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a three-way interaction such that high status incongruence would weaken the transformational leadership to subordinate affective commitment relationship for women, while low status incongruence would strengthen that relationship for men. Model 3 of

Table 4 shows that the three-way interaction of supervisor transformational leadership, status incongruence, and supervisor gender is significant,  $\beta = -.11, p < .05$ . The three-way interaction explained an additional 1% of the variance in subordinate affective organizational commitment which is common for a three-way interaction (McClelland & Judd, 1993). We plotted the interaction according to Aiken and West (1991) and Dawson and Richter (2006). As shown in Figure 4, when there is low status incongruence, the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment is positive and significant for female leaders ( $b = 1.09, t = 9.02, p < .01$ ) and it is also positive but less so when women have high status incongruence ( $b = .55, t = 4.59, p < .01$ ). These lines are significantly different from each other ( $t = -3.22, p < .01$ ) which supports our prediction in Hypothesis 2.

When there is high status incongruence, the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment is positive and significant for male leaders ( $b = .93, t = 5.91, p < .01$ ) and it is also positive and significant for male leaders when status incongruence is low ( $b = .87, t = 5.38, p < .01$ ). These lines are not significantly different from each other ( $t = .31, p > .05$ ) which does not support Hypothesis 2. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 predicted that the two-way and three-way interaction effects on subordinate affective organizational commitment would be mediated by collective identity. To test these moderated mediation hypotheses, we used the method presented by Edwards and Lambert (2007) and adjusted it to accommodate an additional moderator to test Hypothesis 4. For Hypothesis 3, the results in Table 5 show that collective identity is a mediator of the two-way interaction on affective organizational commitment. Transformational leadership has a positive effect on collective identity when there is high status incongruence ( $b = .63, p < .05$ ) and

a stronger positive effect when there is low status incongruence ( $b = .96, p < .01$ ). The positive indirect effect of transformational leadership on affective organizational commitment is stronger for low status incongruence ( $b = .40, p < .01$ ) than for high status incongruence ( $b = .27, p < .05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported. The results in Table 6 show that collective identity is a mediator of the three-way interaction on affective organizational commitment and that the effect is being driven through the female supervisors. There is a negative supervisor transformational leadership  $\times$  status incongruence interaction predicting collective identity ( $b = -.19, p < .01$ ) for female supervisors, and the indirect effect is significant ( $b = -.08, p < .01$ ). There is no such effect for male supervisors. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

### **Study 2 Discussion**

Consistent with Study 1, we found that the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment was less positive when status incongruence was high. We found a significant three-way interaction in Study 2, as in Study 1. However, there are interesting differences between the two three-way interactions. In Study 2, the female leaders in the U.S. suffer more losses of subordinate affective organizational commitment when they are transformational leaders with high status incongruence. When there is low status incongruence, the females in the U.S. do just as well as the males in stimulating subordinates' affective organizational commitment. The three-way interaction in Study 1 shows something different. In low status incongruence situations, the male transformational leaders obtain significantly more affective organizational commitment from followers than their female counterparts. By contrast, when there is high status incongruence, male and female transformational leaders do not differ in their ability to obtain affective organizational commitment from followers.

It is interesting to note that in Turkey (Study 1) there was a negative and significant main effect between female gender and subordinate affective organizational commitment. In the U.S. (Study 2) there is no such effect. Specifically, women in the U.S. seem to have more opportunity to succeed as transformational leaders than women in Turkey, but they are also penalized more than men for high status incongruence. In Turkey (Study 1), males with low status incongruence have the highest subordinate affective organizational commitment when they exhibit transformational leadership, but they also lose some subordinate affective organizational commitment if they have status incongruence or low transformational leadership.

We offer three contextual explanations for the differences in the three-way interactions between the U.S. and Turkey. First, there may be cultural differences between the two countries driven by power distance which could affect the findings. Power distance is the extent to which a society accepts authority and differences between people in power, status, and privilege (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). The more a society accepts large differences between those with and without power, the higher the power distance. The GLOBE study sampled 62 countries (including the U.S. and Turkey) and measured their cultural practices. Measured on a scale from 1 to 7, where 7 is high power distance, the U.S. scores a mean of 4.88 while Turkey scores a mean of 5.57. Turkey is fairly high in power distance (ranked #10 out of the 62 countries sampled). This may explain why there was no significant negative main effect between female gender and affective organizational commitment in the U.S., suggesting that women have more chances to succeed as leaders in the U.S. However, when the women leaders in the U.S. have high status incongruence, they incur more of a penalty than males.

A second explanation for the differences between the Turkish and U.S. findings is the differences in prevalence of women managers between the two countries. In Turkey, women

make up 28.8% of the workforce (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2014), whereas they are half of the U.S. workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Of managers in the workforce, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) published a report in 2014 showing a 5% decline in the female-manager ratio between 2013 and 2014 (down from 30% to 25%; Turkish Statistical Institute, 2014). By contrast, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) reports that 51.39% of employees in management, professional, and related occupations were women in 2013. The prevalence of female managers in the U.S. makes it more likely that a woman manager is not surprising and is readily accepted compared to Turkey. This could explain why women at least have a more consistent chance at some of the highest subordinate affective organizational commitment ratings in the U.S., even if they get penalized more for status incongruence than their male counterparts.

Third, it is also noteworthy that the female leaders with low status incongruence received the lowest ratings of subordinate affective organizational commitment in the Turkish sample. Research conducted in Turkey to study the challenges that women in leadership face reports that women have rivalries with other women which cause jealousy and envy (Örücü, Kılıç, & Kılıç, 2007). One study conducted by Ernst & Young found that the rate of females who would want to have female managers was only 6.8%, while more than twice as many male employees (14.66%) said they would want a female manager (cited in Besler & Oruç, 2010). Women low in status incongruence would present more of a threat, which may explain why other women in a patriarchal society like Turkey may show less affective organizational commitment when they are supervised by women whose credentials outweigh their own. Theoretically, this suggests that women in leadership roles face challenges, including from other women. Rivalries between women may inadvertently fuel the glass escalator effect, whereby men get promoted more

quickly, even in pink-collar settings (Hultin, 2003; Williams, 1992).

### **Supplemental Analyses**

We conducted several supplemental analyses to assess the robustness of our findings. First, given that we presented two samples from pink-collar settings, we collected an additional sample to examine whether we would find results in a non-pink-collar, predominantly male setting<sup>1</sup>. We did not find the two-way and three-way interaction effects in the predominantly male sample. Mean status incongruence between supervisors and subordinates in the non-pink-collar sample was .50 ( $SD = .68$ ) which represents less incongruence than in either Study 1 or Study 2. It appears that in traditional, predominantly male settings, there is less variance on status incongruence between supervisors and subordinates which would limit our ability to find the hypothesized effects in such settings.

Second, to ascertain whether some types of incongruence might be driving the effects above others, we conducted analyses using each incongruence indicator (age, work experience, tenure, education) separately. We found that incongruence on the basis of age, work experience, and tenure were primarily driving the results in both studies and followed similar patterns to those presented in this paper. This may be due to limited variance on the education variable in Study 1, with the overwhelming majority of subordinates (79%) and supervisors (89%) having either an associate or bachelor's degree. In Study 2, 89% of subordinates had a bachelor's degree or less while 75% of supervisors had a bachelor's degree or less.

Third, to assess whether some subordinate or supervisor demographics might be driving

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<sup>1</sup> Data were collected from employed MBA and executive education students and their direct supervisors at a major Southern U.S. university. All employed students (318 employees) completed the subordinate survey, for a 100% participation rate. Of supervisors, 56% returned the survey, for a total of 178 completed surveys. However, missing data reduced the final sample to 144 subordinate-supervisor pairs. Employees came from many industries, 62% were male and they were 29 years old on average. Most supervisors were also male (69%) and their average age was 40 years. We used the same measures from Study 1. The only statistically significant result was a positive main effect of transformational leadership predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment. There were no results for the two-way or three-way interactions. (More detailed information available upon request).

the effects, we ran the analyses once for each subordinate and supervisor status incongruence characteristic (i.e., age, tenure, work experience, and education) using the demographic as the measure of status incongruence. We found very little across the two studies. The one supervisor characteristic that had a significant effect in Study 2 was supervisor age. Subordinates reported higher affective organizational commitment when they reported to older supervisors and especially older supervisors with a transformational leadership style.

Finally, because the subordinates in our samples reported some supervisor demographics, we present two pieces of evidence that employees can estimate supervisor age and other demographics. In Study 2, we gave participants the option of inviting their supervisor to participate in a short survey to complete their demographics. If the supervisor completed the survey, the participating employee was given a small award by the survey company. The supervisors were not awarded anything for completing the survey because the survey company (Qualtrics) would not allow payments to a second party. We had 20 supervisors complete the survey. We observed high correlations between subordinate- and supervisor-rated supervisor demographics. The correlations are 1.0 for sex, 1.0 for race, .92 for age, .94 for education, .90 for total work experience, and .80 for organizational tenure.

In an unrelated study conducted by one of the authors, a paired sample of 306 subordinates and 306 supervisors each completed a survey. In the subordinate survey, we collected subordinate-reported information estimating their supervisor's age, sex, organizational tenure, total work experience, and highest level of education. In the supervisor survey, we asked the supervisors to self-report age, sex, organizational tenure, total work experience, and highest level of education. The correlations were .99 for supervisor age ( $p < .01$ ), 1.0 for supervisor sex ( $p < .01$ ), .92 for supervisor highest education level ( $p < .01$ ), .99 for supervisor organizational

tenure, and .82 for supervisor total work experience. This provides some evidence that employees have an understanding of their supervisors' age and other demographics.

## **General Discussion**

### **Theoretical Implications**

Our studies support and extend role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Across both samples, we found a two-way interaction of transformational leadership and status incongruence predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment. This supports role congruity theory, because when status incongruence is high, the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment is less positive in both studies. In Study 1, although men with low status incongruence are well qualified, they receive lower subordinate affective organizational commitment ratings when they have a low transformational leadership style. This implies that even if a leader is male and competent, if their style is a poor fit for the setting or the followers, they cannot instill the highest levels of follower affective organizational commitment. When male leaders in predominantly female settings are seen as competent but lacking in transformational leadership, they receive reduced levels of subordinate affective organizational commitment. Therefore, we extend role congruity theory to show that even social majority members can derive less affective organizational commitment from followers when their leadership style does not match the characteristics followers desire in that setting.

We also find support for role congruity theory because the male leaders with low status incongruence received higher ratings of subordinate affective organizational commitment than the female leaders with low status incongruence. This seems consistent with research showing that women leaders are evaluated less favorably than men leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In Study 2, we find that there is always a positive relationship between transformational

leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment for men, and this commitment is higher when males have low status incongruence. For female leaders, the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment is positive when there is low status incongruence and positive (but weaker in contrast to their male counterparts) when there is high status incongruence. These effects on affective commitment are driven through less collective identity among the subordinates of female supervisors. This supports role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and extends it by providing a fine-grained test, as women appear to be held to a higher standard than men and obtain less affective organizational commitment from subordinates when they have high status incongruence.

Taken together, Studies 1 and 2 both extend role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory predicts that “to the extent that leader roles are less masculine, they would be more congruent with the female gender role, and therefore the tendency to view women as less qualified than men should weaken or even disappear” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 577). Although the hospital setting in Turkey may have attenuated some of the bias against women because the women’s caring characteristics could have been seen as a benefit in that context, there was still a preference for men (especially transformational men with low status incongruence). In Study 2, across many different pink-collar settings, male leaders always had a positive relationship between transformational leadership style and subordinate affective organizational commitment. The women exhibit the steepest positive slope between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment in the U.S. sample when there is low status incongruence, but they had a significantly less positive slope compared to women with high status incongruence. It is worth noting that the slope of the line for women with high status incongruence was significantly less positive than that of their male

counterparts with high status incongruence ( $t = -2.12, p < .05$ ). Therefore, in the U.S., women's subordinates may confer a qualified leadership advantage on females (Rosette & Tost, 2010) but they also penalize females more than males when they exhibit high status incongruence. This extends role congruity theory because it implies that multiple contextual variables, such as the context of the work being done, the prevalence of women in leadership, and the cultural values in a society may simultaneously affect outcomes.

Furthermore, we find support for Kanter's theory (1977) of minorities. The male minority in this setting appears to be salient, and that works for him when he has strong credentials plus a transformational leadership style. However, it works against him somewhat when he does not have the right leadership style, even if his credentials are strong. This implies that numerical minorities are evaluated not only by their credentials, but also by whether they are perceived as being appropriate leaders who fit the setting. Thus, our findings are consistent with previous work (Fiedler, 1967, 1971, 1978) predicting that leader effectiveness is contingent upon the combination of the leader, the subordinates, and the situation. Meta-analyses testing Fiedler's contingency theory of leadership present mixed results with some showing support (Strube & Garcia, 1981) and others showing mixed support (Peters, Hartke, & Pohlmann, 1985). This led Peters et al. (1985) to state that more variables need to be examined to account for their mixed results. In this study, we answer this call for more nuanced research to examine leadership in its context as well as account for mediating mechanisms (i.e., collective identity).

### **Practical Implications**

Our study provides more evidence that subordinate responses to leadership are complex and depend on situational factors including the leader's credentials relative to those of the subordinate, their leadership style, their gender, and how this unfolds within a given context. The

findings suggest that women leaders face challenges, even in predominantly female settings. Our Study 1 findings show that male transformational leaders with low status incongruence elicit more affective organizational commitment than their female counterparts. The only time the female leaders in our Study 1 sample received some of the higher affective organizational commitment ratings from subordinates was when they were high in status incongruence, perhaps because they are less likely to trigger the rivalry that has been found between women in Turkish organizations (Örücü et al., 2007). In Study 2, the women transformational leaders with high status incongruence obtained a fairly high amount of affective organizational commitment from subordinates but still trailed behind their male counterparts. Further, the interactive effects of transformational leadership and status incongruence on subordinate affective organizational commitment were transmitted through a lack of collective identity for female leaders who are high in status incongruence.

Overall, this suggests that women still face challenges in leadership roles both in Turkey and in the U.S. Although men incur some penalty from status incongruence in the Turkish hospital setting, the women leaders with low status incongruence received the lowest levels of subordinate affective organizational commitment in spite of their credentials. In the U.S. sample, women with high status incongruence seem to be penalized more than their male counterparts. The finding that men in the Turkish sample with low status incongruence and a transformational leadership style elicit the most affective organizational commitment from subordinates is consistent with work showing that positive deviations from traditional gender roles (e.g., men exhibiting caring in a setting that values that) can benefit the leader (Wang, et al., 2013). While women leaders are expected to be benevolent due to gender role stereotypes (Heilman, 2001), men who display such characteristics obtain a leadership bonus (Wang et al., 2013).

Our findings seem consistent with evidence that males in pink-collar settings are more successful than their female counterparts. Williams (1992) found this phenomenon in pink-collar jobs and called it a “glass escalator effect”. Hultin (2003) found support for the glass escalator effect in pink-collar settings, reporting that men advanced more rapidly than equally qualified women. Low status incongruence seems to help male leaders more than it helps female leaders by providing them with more gains in subordinate affective organizational commitment. When men have low status incongruence, a transformational leadership style should build bonds and improve the organizational commitment of their subordinates.

Organizations may consider training employees on the biases that women in leadership face. As more women enter leadership roles, it is in organizations’ best interests to help women be successful in those roles. In a study about implicit (i.e., subconscious) bias against women leaders, Dasgupta and Asgari (2004) found that when female participants were exposed to information about famous female leaders, they were less likely to show automatic stereotyping of women in a subsequent experimental activity. In a field sample at colleges, Dasgupta and Asgari (2004) found that automatic stereotyping of women leaders was more likely to happen in the coed college (where men and women go to school together) compared to the women’s college. Therefore, the environment as well as exposure to counter-stereotypical examples seem to be key. If there are both men and women in the environment, it appears that gender stereotypes are easily primed and it will be more important to use counter-stereotypical examples of successful female leaders to counteract these stereotypes. For example, the hospitals in our sample could feature pictures of Marie Curie, the only woman to win a Nobel Prize twice, and other famous female scientists alongside famous male scientists in hallways or break rooms to remind employees that women are capable of doing great things. A good example for Turkey,

specifically, would be Safiye Ali, the first woman to obtain a medical degree in Turkey.

Finally, we found a two-way interaction of transformational leadership and status incongruence on subordinate affective organizational commitment across both studies. Research on age norms (Dannefer, 2003; Lawrence, 1996) has identified that patterns emerge with respect to the ages of the people who tend to be individual contributors and managers at various levels. As the workforce ages and people work longer out of financial need or a desire due to longer life expectancy, researchers have predicted a “demographic time bomb” (Tempest, Barnatt, & Coupland, 2002). One problem that may unfold is that younger employees may become frustrated if older employees remain in their supervisory roles and do not make room for younger and middle-aged employees to have a chance at leadership. Our study suggests that when younger employees have an opportunity to try leadership, managing older workers may be a challenge if the status incongruence between them inhibits subordinate affective commitment to the organization. Older employees have inevitably had more time to accumulate work experience, tenure, and education compared to younger employees. If this is coupled with older employees having low expectations of their younger supervisors, as Collins et al. (2009) reported, younger supervisors can have a difficult time. Although the U.S. Age Discrimination in Employment Act focuses on discrimination against older workers, future work should also focus on the challenges that younger supervisors face in a diverse workforce.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The data were collected in cross-sectional surveys in our samples. However, most variables of interest in the studies were collected from the subordinate surveys. Although there can be spurious correlations due to common method variance, there is no theoretical reason to expect spurious interaction effects due to common method variance (Evans, 1985; Schmitt,

1994). Nevertheless, future experimental or longitudinal work can build upon our study and establish causal relationships with more certainty.

Another limitation is that subordinates reported both their own age and the estimated age of their supervisor in our studies. This is appropriate given our focus on employee perceptions of status characteristics and how incongruence influences employee affective organizational commitment. When the dependent variable is an attitude such as affective commitment, individual perceptions are valid (Spector, 1994). Still, the ideal design would have been to collect all demographics from the subordinate and the supervisor so that we could cross-check subordinate-reported demographics with those reported by their supervisors. Future research may expand upon our study by measuring credentials from both subordinates and supervisors.

While our measure of status incongruence takes into account the level of education attained by subordinates and supervisors, it does not account for the prestige of the education attained. For example, if both persons have a bachelor's degree but one is from Harvard and the other is from a less-known institution, there may be a perceived status incongruence between them. Future research may use more detailed measures of status incongruence to capture these potential differences in status.

Finally, future research should investigate other dependent variables of interest not examined in the present study. For example, perceived effectiveness of the leader would be a relevant outcome variable to examine.

## **Conclusion**

Extending leadership research, we find that transformational leadership is not a very effective means of enhancing subordinate affective organizational commitment under conditions of high status incongruence. Furthermore, possibly specific to our predominantly female setting

in Studies 1 and 2, we find that although men generally tend to receive higher levels of affective organizational commitment from their subordinates compared to women, they sometimes receive less affective organizational commitment when they offer little transformational leadership, depending upon the context. One consistent finding across both studies is that men who have low status incongruence (i.e., older, more education, more experience, higher tenure) in predominately female settings receive the most affective organizational commitment from their subordinates when they are transformational leaders. The road for women leaders, even in pink-collar occupations, appears rocky in that female leaders do not seem to receive the highest affective organizational commitment from their subordinates regardless of how transformational they are. The good news for women, from a practical standpoint, is that if they have low status incongruence and work in a context where women in leadership are common (e.g., the U.S.), they can obtain among the highest levels of subordinate affective organizational commitment.

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Table 1

*Study 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Supervisor transformational leadership	4.67	1.66							
2. Status incongruence (between supervisor and subordinate)	1.24	1.02	-.09						
3. Subordinate more experience	.35	.48	-.10	.65**					
4. Subordinate more tenure	.34	.47	-.21**	.56**	.07				
5. Subordinate more education	.26	.44	.18*	.23**	-.23**	-.04			
6. Subordinate older	.33	.47	-.10	.73**	.55**	.15	-.15		
7. Supervisor gender (1 = female)	.71	.46	-.15	.04	.16*	-.17*	-.07	.17*	
8. Subordinate affective organizational commitment	3.24	1.91	.28**	-.02	-.29**	-.29**	-.29**	.03	-.29**

$N = 170$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Two-tailed tests.

Table 2

*Study 1 Hierarchical Linear Model Results Predicting Subordinate Affective Organizational Commitment*

	Subordinate Affective Organizational Commitment		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept, $\gamma_{00}$	3.21**	3.15**	3.12**
Supervisor transformational leader (STL), $\gamma_{10}$	-.04	-.04	.07
Status incongruence, $\gamma_{20}$	-.13	.30	.31
Supervisor gender, $\gamma_{01}$	-.90*	-.71†	-.56†
STL $\times$ Status incongruence, $\gamma_{30}$		-.19*	-.23**
STL $\times$ Supervisor gender, $\gamma_{11}$		-.01	-.14
Status incongruence $\times$ Supervisor gender, $\gamma_{21}$		1.59**	1.70**
STL $\times$ Status incongruence $\times$ Supervisor gender, $\gamma_{31}$			.61**
$\Delta$ Pseudo $R^2$ (Level 1 variance explained)		10.57%	5.35%
$\Delta \chi^2$		-18.35**	-6.88**

$N = 170$ .

†  $p < .10$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Two-tailed tests.

Supervisor gender coded 1 = female, 0 = male.

Table 3

*Study 2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Supervisor transformational leadership	4.31	1.17								
2. Status incongruence (between supervisor and subordinate)	1.35	1.23	-.08							
3. Subordinate more experience	.44	.50	-.08	.86**						
4. Subordinate more tenure	.28	.45	-.01	.58**	.32**					
5. Subordinate more education	.20	.40	-.09	.31**	.08	-.14*				
6. Subordinate older	.43	.50	-.03	.84**	.78**	.31**	.01			
7. Supervisor gender (1 = female)	.62	.49	-.07	-.03	-.03	.06	-.05	-.04		
8. Collective identity	4.54	1.59	.58**	.00	-.03	.07	-.01	-.03	-.07	
9. Subordinate affective organizational commitment	4.20	1.61	.59**	-.08	-.05	.02	-.11	-.07	-.06	.60**

$N = 279$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Two-tailed tests.

Table 4

*Study 2 Moderated Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Subordinate Affective Organizational Commitment*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
<i>Predictor</i>			
Supervisor transformational leadership (STL)	.58**	.60**	.60**
Status incongruence	-.03	-.04	-.05
Supervisor gender (1 = female)	-.02	-.02	-.03
<i>Interaction</i>			
STL × Status incongruence		-.11*	-.08
STL × Supervisor gender		-.04	-.04
Status incongruence × Supervisor gender		.06	.07
STL × Status incongruence × Supervisor gender			-.11*
$R^2$	.35*	.37*	.38*
$\Delta R^2$		.02	.01*

$N = 279$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Two-tailed tests.

Supervisor gender coded 1 = female, 0 = male.

Table 5

*Study 2 Path Estimates of Indirect, Direct, and Total Effects for the Two-Way Interaction (Transformational Leadership × Status Incongruence) Predicting Affective Organizational Commitment*

	Transformational Leadership → Mediator	Mediator → Affective Commitment	Effects		
			Indirect	Direct	Total (Direct + Indirect)
Collective Identity					
High Status Incongruence	.63**	.42**	.27**	.52**	.79**
Low Status Incongruence	.96**	.42**	.40**	.52**	.92**
Difference	-.33†	--	-.13†	--	-.13†

*Note.*  $N = 279$ . Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented. Differences in the simple effects were computed by subtracting the effects of low status incongruence supervisors from the effects of high status incongruence supervisors. Test of the differences of the transformational leadership → mediator path is equivalent to the test of a two-way interaction. Significance tests for the indirect and total effects and differences between the indirect and total effects are based on the bias-corrected confidence intervals derived from bootstrapping estimates with 1000 samples, as explained in Edwards and Lambert (2007).

†  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . Two-tailed tests.

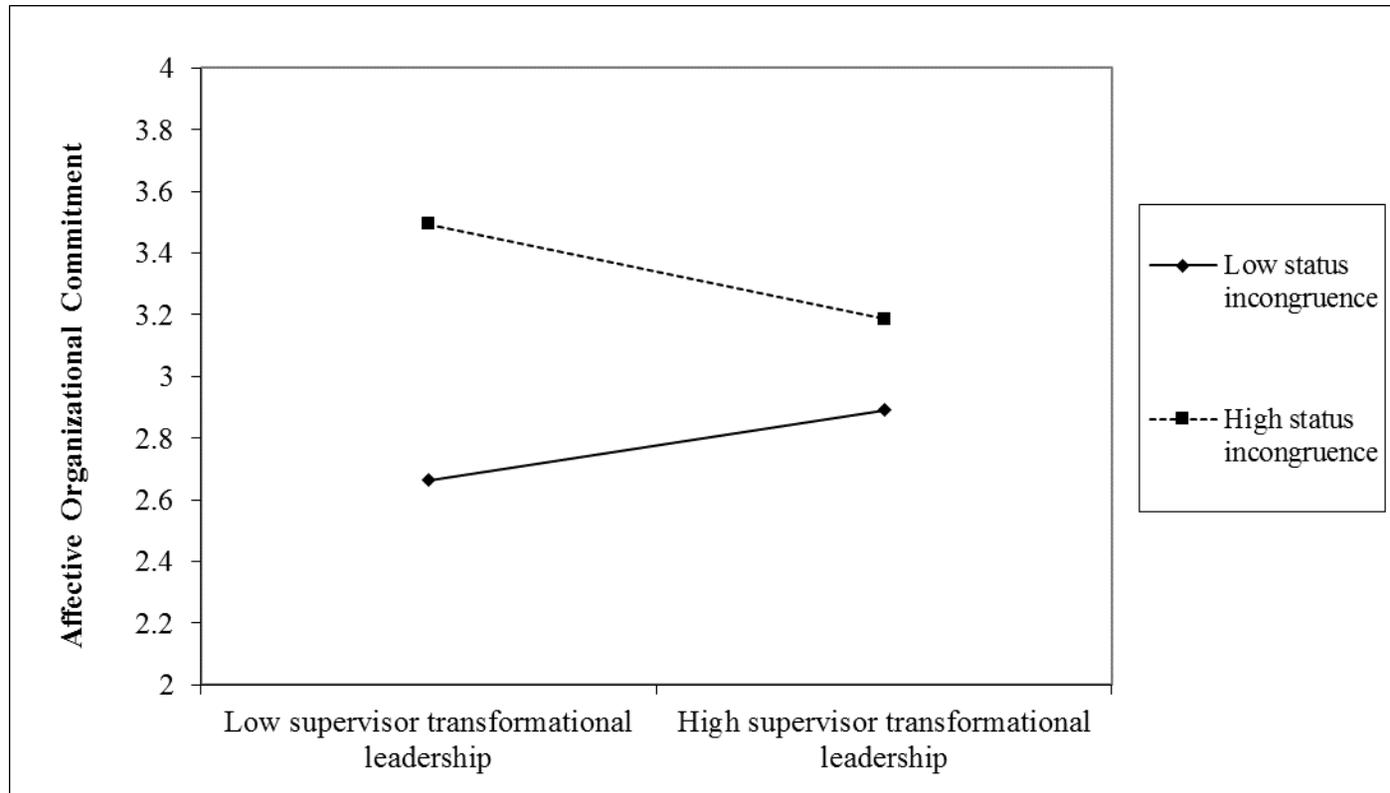
Table 6

*Study 2 Path Estimates of Indirect, Direct, and Total Effects for the Three-Way Interaction (Transformational Leadership × Status Incongruence × Supervisor Gender) Predicting Affective Organizational Commitment*

	Transformational Leadership × Status Incongruence → Mediator	Mediator → Affective Commitment	Effects		
			Indirect	Direct	Total (Direct + Indirect)
Collective Identity					
Female Supervisor	-.19**	.41**	-.08**	-.08	-.16**
Male Supervisor	-.01	.41**	-.01	-.08	-.09
Difference	-.18	--	-.07	--	-.07

*Note.*  $N = 279$ . Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented. Differences in the simple effects were computed by subtracting the effects of male supervisors from the effects of female supervisors. Test of the differences of the transformational leadership × status incongruence → mediator path is equivalent to the test of a three-way interaction. Significance tests for the indirect and total effects and differences between the indirect and total effects are based on the bias-corrected confidence intervals derived from bootstrapping estimates with 1000 samples, as explained in Edwards and Lambert (2007).

†  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . Two-tailed tests.



*Figure 1.* Two-way interaction of supervisor transformational leadership and supervisor-subordinate status incongruence predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment (Study 1).

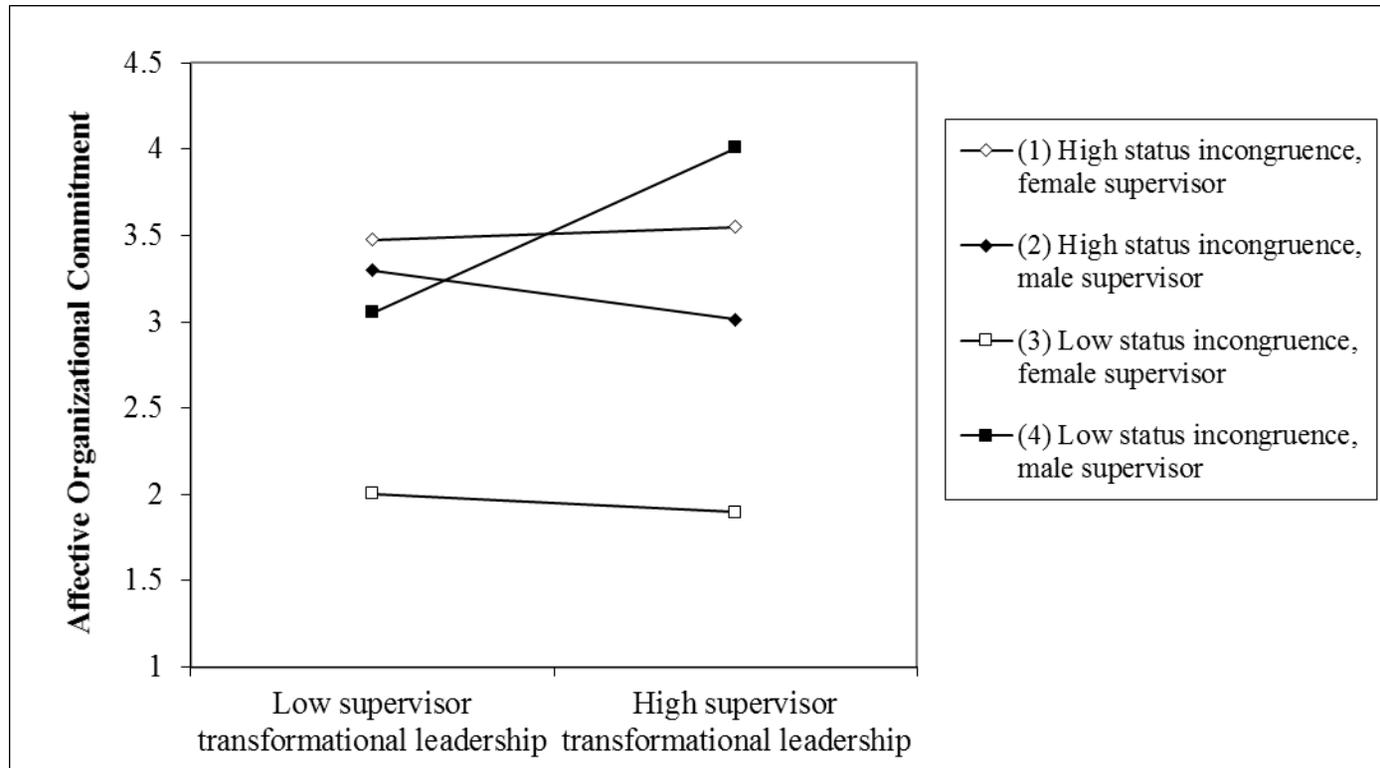
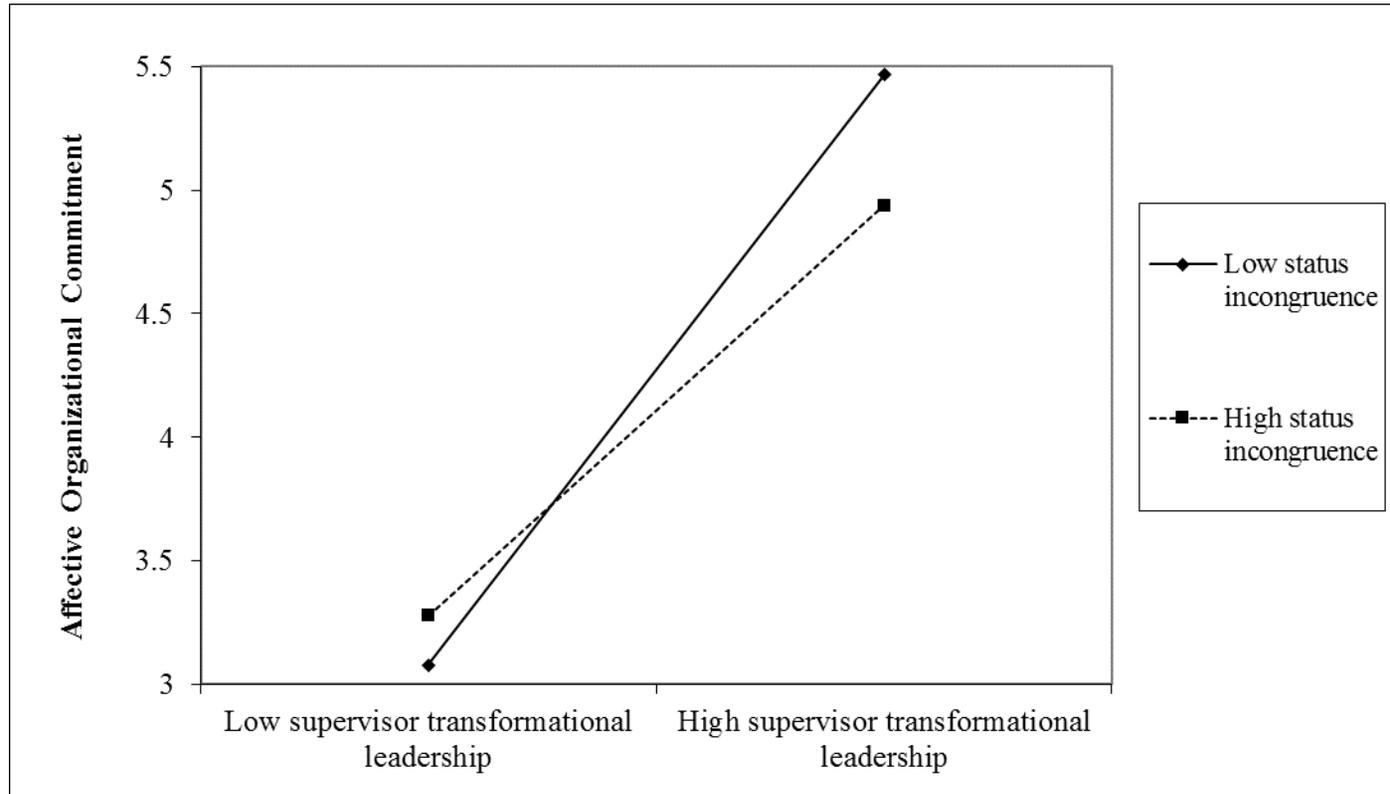


Figure 2. Three-way interaction of supervisor transformational leadership, supervisor-subordinate status incongruence, and supervisor gender predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment (Study 1).



*Figure 3.* Two-way interaction of supervisor transformational leadership and supervisor-subordinate status incongruence predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment (Study 2).

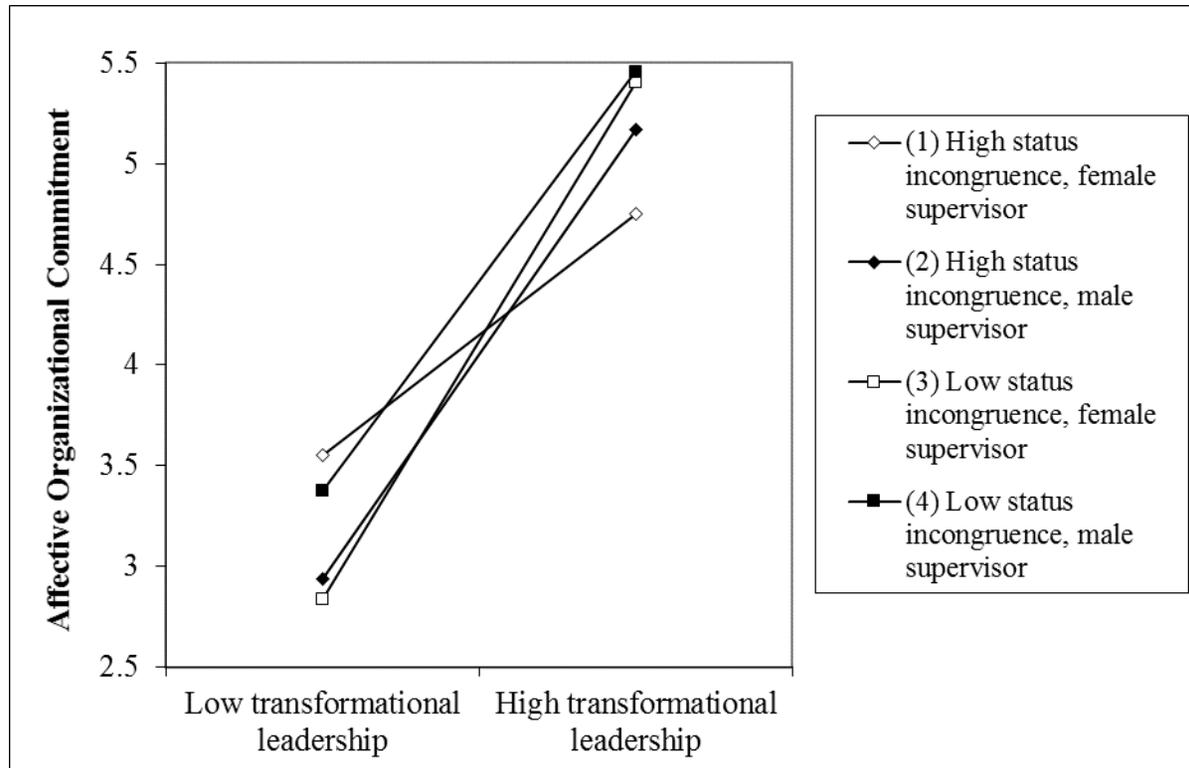


Figure 4. Three-way interaction of supervisor transformational leadership, supervisor-subordinate status incongruence, and supervisor gender predicting subordinate affective organizational commitment (Study 2).