Male Leaders with Paternity Leaves:

Effects of Work Norms on Effectiveness Evaluations

ABSTRACT

With the growing relevance of both work-family balance and gender equality at work, researchers have extensively recognized the importance of men's greater home involvement. Yet, little is known about how people evaluate men and particularly male leaders with explicit involved fathering behaviors, such as taking a paternity leave. Using a social normative perspective, we explore whether cultural standards providing social approval for work-life balance influence competence evaluations of male leaders who request a paternity leave outside the standard. Results from three studies across experimental and field-based set-ups suggest that perceptions of a supportive work-family culture favor more positive evaluations of male leaders who request a paternity leave above and beyond that accounted for by control variables. These associations were stronger for men and people with high leadership aspirations and roles. When evaluations of female leaders were also assessed, slightly lower status was attributed to male compared to female leaders who requested a leave. The findings are discussed in terms of how male managers´ domestic behavior should be further reinforced with organizational discourses and practices.

Keywords: paternity leave; gender equality; leadership; stereotypes; work-family culture.

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During the course of modern history all over the world, men have used parental leaves of absence to a lower extent than women. The previous media excerpt will suffice to make clear how well socially justified this phenomenon is in many contexts. Despite the growing attention garnered by work-life balance and the changing principles that regulate leaves of absence for working parents after childbirth, seven in every ten men taking parental leave in the United States only take less than ten days of leave when a child is born (US Department of Labor, 2015). Although men tend to take slightly longer leaves in Europe (i.e., around 12.5 fully paid days on average, with strong variations across countries), the gender gap is substantial too, with mothers taking much more frequent and longer leaves than fathers (European Commission, 2015). As such, men's limited use of paternity leaves is one of the most important factors for the persistence of gender discrimination at work (Bittman, Hill & Thomas, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; European Commission, 2015).

Whereas the bulk of parental leave continues to rest on women, penalties are not limited to them. The negative impact that parental leaves have for employees are extensive to both female and male involved parents who take leaves of absence from work and might be one of the reasons why working fathers are not more involved at home (Ladge et al., 2014). The penalties that workers suffer include negative performance ratings, fewer promotions and salary penalties (Judiesch & Lyness, 1999), as well as lower perceived commitment and allocation of organizational rewards (Allen, Leadbeater & Aber, 1994).

The adverse effects that leaves have for (male) employees' career is in part due to the prevalent strength of the gender division of labor and the generalized assumption that employees' and particularly men's commitment derives from their disposition to prioritize the organization over personal interests (Acker, 1990). These associations are particularly

marked in upper levels, whereby effectiveness is strongly associated with men and agentic functions (Koenig et al., 2011). Given that managerial roles are particularly demanding and people expect managers more than other employees to be fully committed to their jobs (Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1977), career penalties and evaluations resulting from leaves of absence are particularly challenging in managerial roles. Yet, only a very limited number of studies have examined perceptions of male leaders –and leaders more generally- who take paternity leaves (Judiesch & Lyness, 1999).

In the current study, we extend previous research on parental leave and leadership stereotyping by focusing on evaluations toward fictitious male leaders who request parental leaves and identifying contextual factors that might help mitigate peoples' negative evaluations toward them. Social normative research has repeatedly shown that people strongly adhere to social norms when evaluating target groups (Crandall, Eshleman & O´Brin, 2002). For instance, previous research has shown that changing the norm about the expression of prejudice with a single confederate expressing antiracist views can have a dramatic effect on people's tolerance for racist acts (Blanchard, López-de-Silanes & Sheleifer, 1994) or gay-related attitudes (Monteith, Deneen & Tooman, 1996). Extending group norm theories and the idea that individual attitudes toward others are all the product of socialization processes in a given social group (Crandall et al., 2002; Sherif, 1963), we investigate the connections between work norms and perceptions of leaders who request a parental leave outside the usual length. We contend that employees that are led to believe that spending time away from work to be at home with the family is normatively prescribed might experience reduced endorsement of stereotypes against male leaders with a parental leave, thereby rating them more positively in three relevant domains of leadership competence (i.e., perceived effectiveness, power and status).

In three studies combining different research designs, fictitious male leaders were evaluated by participants who varied in the extent to which their immediate work context

supported work-family balance. Under the premise that people conform more to reference groups that represent important groups to which they belong or want to belong (Bond & Smith, 1996), we also explored potential differences for male and female observers, as well as whether differences in managerial roles increase people's likelihood to be affected by norm-compliant behavior when evaluating male leaders. We focused on paternity rather than maternity leaves because only a limited number of studies have addressed whether and how parental leaves influence male managers' career (Judiesch & Lyness, 1999). Given that men still represent the majority in most managerial contexts and they often serve as a reference of appropriate behavior for other people in organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2007), understanding the factors that promote a greater assumption of male leaders´ domestic work is critical for women´s advancement in organizations (Bittman et al., 2007; European Commission, 2015). Despite the relevance of addressing male managers' work-life balance, there is little, if any, empirical research looking at the factors that may help mitigate negative reactions against male leaders with paternity leaves.

Paternity Leaves and Gender Equality at Work

Despite the relentless rise of women in the labor market, women are still the main providers of care for dependents at home (Fine, 2012) and they are responsible for most of the unpaid domestic work (Collins, 2007). Women are also more likely than men to leave paid work or reduce their working hours and salary to provide care and assume domestic duties (Bittman et al., 2007; US Department of Labor, 2015). Because parental leave is a special form of childcare that represents a formal absence from work, it often results in a "motherhood penalty" with negative consequences for women´s career (Budig & England, 2001). Parental leave also reflects the decisive early starting point through which parents develop a sense of their future parental responsibilities, and it therefore represents a critical area to promote gender equality (European Commission, 2015; Mundy, 2013).

Previous research on the interface between work and family has provided extensive evidence that using resources in one domain of life (e.g., family) can affect the others (e.g., work). A relevant conceptual framework is provided by resource allocation theory (Hobfoll, 2002), according to which using resources involves opportunity costs that limit the extent to which people can allocate resources and energy to different domains at the same time. A leave of absence for childbirth reasons constitutes a particularly problematic form of work-life conflict as it implies voluntarily spending a relatively long period away from ones' job during which the employee remains uninterruptedly employed. As such, the employee is indirectly deciding to spend her/his energy and time on a personal activity that in principle comes at the expense of her/his optimal contribution to the organization, ultimately affecting that employee's future career success (Judiesch & Lyness, 1999).

Although research looking specifically at the impact of fathers' leaves on their career is still very limited (Escot et al., 2012; Holter 2007), there is empirical support that paternity leave has negative impacts on fathers´ future earnings and professional advancement (Allen & Russell, 1999; Allen et al. 1994; Fleischmann & Sieverding, 2015; Rege & Solli, 2013). Judiesch and Lyness (1999) found that promotion penalties were not only high for female managers who had taken leaves of absence compared to those who had not taken leaves, but also for male leaders. In a similar vein, Mclaughlin and Muldoon (2014) found that men experienced difficulties for taking days off to attend family responsibilities, even with short paternity leaves. These findings are consistent with the foundations of role congruity (Carli & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002) and backlash theories (Rudman & Glick, 2001) showing that individuals who violate gender stereotypes (e.g., men performing domestic roles) receive social and economic penalties.

Consistent with these effects, an experimental study about the effects of parental leave of absence on performance evaluations and recommendations for organizational rewards showed that, compared to women, men who were portrayed as having taken a

parental leave were even penalized to a greater extent in terms of perceived commitment and reward recommendations than women (Allen & Russell, 1999). In a study of Australian male employees using paternity leave, managers did not trust the honest nature of men with a leave and considered that they were using leaves as an excuse to extend their holidays (Bittman et al., 2007). Whereas these studies have provided some grounding to understand the effects of domestic responsibilities, the specific question of which factors can help reduce bias against employees and particularly among male leaders who take paternity leaves remains unanswered.

Effects of Work Norms on Individual Attitudes

Although in recent years societies and organizations are changing in relation to what is expected from employees and family-friendly programs are increasingly more relevant, the idea that the best employees prioritize their career over other life domains and spend long hours at work is still prevalent (Escot et al., 2012). Cultural norms about employees´ needs to conciliate work and personal lives still reward old ways of doing business in which presentism was seen as a signal of commitment (Darcy et al., 2012; Gregory & Milner, 2011). These prescriptions are associated with cultural expectations about the number of hours that employees are expected to spend at work, as well as the normative image of the ideal worker, which continues to be that of a male employee working with full-time and with no domestic responsibilities (Escot et al., 2012). Consistent with these prescriptions, employees who use work-family measures are seen as less committed (Darcy et al., 2012; Perlow, 1995).

The constrains of combining work and family responsibilities are particularly challenging for managers, given their greater responsibilities and the traditionally male-dominated nature of such roles (Tharenou, 1999; Molders et al., 2017; Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017). Although estimates about the average number of hours that managers spend at work vary, around 40% of U.S. male managers (compared to 20% of U.S. female

managers) tend to spend 49 or more hours at work per week (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000). These patterns seem to be even more extreme for senior executives (56 hours) and top executives (50–70 hours; Hochschild, 1997). In many companies, managers' pressures for working extreme hours even on days that are in principle not scheduled for work is common. For managers in this context "pretty soon meeting early in the morning or on Saturday becomes an institutionalized norm" (Brett & Stroh, 2003; p. 68). Because managerial roles are very visible in organizations and most managers have traditionally been men without domestic responsibilities, people might be particularly aware of the conflictive nature of managerial and domestic roles and see potential managers who decide to take long parental leaves as a signal of the limited energy and time that they can –and decide to- allocate to work-related tasks.

Work norms are critical to the existence of these beliefs, as they signal appropriate ways for the internationalization and expression of attitudes toward other social groups. This information to which people turn to form appropriate beliefs can result from either direct contact with other members in an organization or indirect normative sources such as magazines, the media or general information in their immediate context. In the domain of prejudice, there is relative agreement that merely manipulating the apparent consensus about a group is enough to change prejudiced expression (Blanchard et al., 1994; Monteith et al., 1996; Stangor et al., 2001). Consistent with this approach, the Asch studies (1951) demonstrated that group pressures have strong effects upon the modification of people´s judgements and evaluations.

Attitudes and prejudices about other social groups are particularly subjective, and therefore one's perception of stereotyping norms in the context has been demonstrated to be strongly linked to the endorsement of individual stereotypes and attitudes toward others (Asch, 1952; Stangor, Sechrist & Jost, 2001; Sherif, 1963). For instance, research about opinion change has shown that students can change their political orientations to make

them more similar to those of other students (for reviews, see Abrams & Hogg, 1990;

Turner, 1991). Likewise, social normative research examining manipulated forms of social

norms has repeatedly shown that people strongly adhere to social norms when evaluating

target groups (Crandall et al., 2002). From a positive viewpoint, the simple manipulation

of the feedback that is given to a person about others' beliefs (in the direction of making a

belief socially normative) can reduce prejudice against people in different social groups

such as race minorities (Wittenbrink & Henly, 1996).

In the work-life balance literature, research has repeatedly suggested that the

negative evaluations that people hold toward employees who take parental leaves are in

part due to the generalized assumption that work and family are incompatible domains and

that people should prioritize the interests of the organization over personal interests as a

signal of commitment (Powell, 1990). Based on the idea that people's perception that a set

of given behaviors are shared in their immediate group can influence their beliefs about

social groups (Asch, 1952; Blanchard et al., 1994; Crandall et al., 2002; Stangor et al.,

2001; Sherif, 1963), shared consensus about the relevance of work-family balance in

organizational life may activate more positive mental associations of domestic behaviors,

allowing more positive mental imageries of involved working parents when the category

about such group is activated. In other words, consensual validation about how acceptable

work-family behaviors are may have an effect on the endorsement of more favorable

beliefs about male leaders who take a leave outside the norm and stay at home when a

child is born.

Note here that formal policies and country legislation can determine the domestic

division of labor through their key impact on social norms (Boeri et al., 2005), and

therefore the standards for an acceptable length of parental leave can vary across cultural

contexts. In European countries such as Spain, the legislative framework tends to provide

an average of two weeks of statutory fully-paid parental leave for male employees, with

100% of covered pay and provided by social security (European Commission, 2015). Although very little research and statistics are available for the actual take-up of parental leave (Shulze & Gergoric, 2015), there is evidence that men´s take-up of the full statutory paternity leave is relatively common (i.e., around 76% of Spanish men, of which 97% use the whole statutory period of 13 days; Meil, Romero & Muntanyola, 2013). These percentages are similar to men´s take-up of statutory paternity leaves in other European countries (e.g., more than 80% of men take it in Norway, Finland and Sweeden, with a length of five, three and two months respectively; Haas & Rostgaard, 2011). Contrasting these numbers, less than 5% of men use long parental leaves beyond the traditional statutory minimum of two weeks (see Meil et al., 2013; Willis Towers Watson, 2016 for Spanish data). For the purposes of this study, therefore, we focus on the effects of social norms on evaluations of male leaders who take a leave beyond the standard. Based on the abovementioned associations between social norms and attitudes toward social groups (Asch, 1952; Stangor et al., 2001; Sherif, 1963; Crandall et al., 2002), we propose that:

> *Hypothesis 1. Male managers who request a parental leave outside the standard will be evaluated more positively when supportive (versus non supportive) norms about work-family culture are presented.*

Moderating Effects

As we have argued, people strongly desire acceptance by their immediate groups and thus easily conform to contextual pressures. Yet, individuals are likely to conform more to groups that represent important categories to which they belong or want to belong (Bond & Smith, 1996). The similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1977) helps to understand these effects by explaining how people are more likely to be attracted to and influenced by similar others. Because managerial roles are a major source of categorization, the effects of organizational norms on attitudes toward leaders may be stronger as managerial aspirations and roles increase.

A particularly relevant category in this context is participant sex. The effects of organizational norms on the evaluations of male leaders with a leave should in principle be stronger for male employees given that men are more likely than women to occupy managerial roles and their disposition to adhere to stereotyped prescriptions of management are particularly strong (Koenig et al., 2011; Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). This perspective is consistent with research showing the strongly gendered nature of organizational prescriptions and norms regarding masculinity especially for male managers in organizations (Ely & Meyerson, 2010; Gartzia & van Knippenberg, 2015; Post, 2015). In comparison to women, men also tend to react more negatively toward men who have taken a parental leave in terms of lower perceptions of respectfulness, competency and hirability ratings (Fleischmann & Sieverding, 2015). In contrast, because women do not fit culturally prescribed organizational prototypes, they often feel weaker pressures to identify with organizational norms (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

An additional potential moderator of the effects of work-life social norms on evaluations of male leaders are leadership roles and expectations. Because people in managerial roles generally have important responsibilities and capacity to make decisions, they feel more committed to organizational practices than regular employees and their identities are often nested within the superordinate organizational identity (Foreman & Whetten, 2002). Leaders are also responsible for applying normative procedures, which may make their action and attitudes to be closely aligned with such procedures (Folger & Bies, 1989). Such a compliant alignment involves the ability to align with one's organizations in relation to how to interpret, communicate and make decisions about work-related issues and has been identified as a critical factor for leaders' contribution to organizational performance (Voss, Cable & Voss, 2006).

Actual managerial roles might be a straightforward factor generating pressures to assimilate to the cultural norms of the organization and more strongly interiorize

socialization practices. Likewise, individual dispositions regarding the desirability of occupying managerial roles might likewise increase people's alignment with organizational practices and norms. Leadership aspirations represent the extent to which one wishes to become a manager (O´Brien, 1996) and is associated with the subjective perception that one will be in a powerful position in the future. Given the strong connections between organizational cultures and managerial identities (see Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), to the extent that one expects to have a relevant role in an organization, one's implicit values and attitudes would desire to align with the organization. Consistent with these associations, we posed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Participant sex moderates the effects of work-family normative support on evaluations of male leaders, such that the effect will be stronger for male than female participants.

Hypothesis 3: Proximity to leadership roles moderates the effects of work-family normative support on evaluations of male leaders, such that the effect will be stronger for people with high (vs. low) leadership aspirations and roles.

STUDY 1

Method

 Participants and design. Participants were 97 business administration students in Spain (41 men, 56 women). Mean age was 21.88 ($SD = 3.92$), with an average work experience of one and a half years. Although university students have generally not experienced the challenges of work-family balance personally, understanding students´ reactions is appropriate to capture general biases and psychological processes that influence organizational behavior. In fact, it has been previously noted that experimental research questions "can often be answered equally well with university students or organizational employees" (Bono & McNamara, 2011, p.658). Participants were randomly assigned to two experimental conditions, resulting in a 2 (work-family norms: supportive

vs. unsupportive) × 2 (Participant sex: male vs. female) between-subjects factorial design.

To rule out the possibility that the effects of work-family support were limited to

evaluations of leaders with a particular leave length (see Fleischman & Sieverding, 2015),

further information was provided to participants in relation to its length. Taking into

account the statutory minimum of two weeks that is commonly taken by Spanish working

fathers (Meil et al., 2013), the following conditions were established: short leave (from 2

days to 2 weeks) vs. long leave (from 2 weeks to 3 months).

   Procedure and manipulations. Participants were asked to complete a paper-and-

pencil questionnaire during regular class sessions. Instructions asked them to read the

summary of a recent study looking at the extent to which work-life balance is supported in

contemporary organizations. The study summary included the following information:

> According to a recently published study, work life balance is
>
> [still very limited in many companies in our working environment. People do not
>
> generally approve that employees take parental leaves to be absent from work
>
> prioritizing family life over work responsibilities] (unsupportive condition).
>
> [increasingly more valued in many companies in our working environment. People
>
> are increasingly more often allowed to take parental leaves to be absent from work
>
> to take care of family responsibilities] (supportive condition).

   After the introductory description of work-family normative information,

participants were asked to read the description of an actual male employee with a

managerial position in a fictitious company that was very well positioned in its sector of

activity. To avoid providing information about the research objectives, information about

the sex of the manager was covert using a common Spanish male name (i.e., Alberto), a

name previously used for similar research purposes (see Gartzia et al., 2012). The male

manager was presented as having recently become a father and as having requested to take

a paternity leave to spend time outside work (less than two weeks in the short leave

condition vs. two to twelve weeks in the long leave condition). After reading the description of the manager, participants were asked to answer to different questions that included an evaluation of the manager and general issues about their own future at work.

Measures

Perceived Effectiveness. Participants evaluated effectiveness of the leader with four items previously used by Haslam and Ryan (2008) to evaluate potential candidates in a leadership position. One example item is "This person would be a good leader". Participants evaluated the leader on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Appropriate internal consistency rates were found ($\alpha = .91$).

Perceived Status and Power. Participants evaluated leaders´ perceived power and status with seven items of previous research (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). To evaluate power, participants indicated to what extent they perceived that this manager could have power, control over others, control over resources and the ability to reward and punish. To evaluate status, participants indicated in a three-item scale their perceptions of how well regarded, admirable, and high integrity the supervisor was viewed to be. Ratings varied from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Appropriate internal consistency rates were found for both variables ($\alpha = .85$ for power and $\alpha = .86$ for status).

Leadership Aspirations. Participants evaluated their leadership aspirations with three items taken from O'Brien (1996) that capture to what extent people hope to become a leader in their career field from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). One example item is "When I am established in my career, I would like to manage other employees". An acceptable internal consistency rate was found for the items that formed the scale ($\alpha = .62$).

Manipulation Checks. Participants' immediate reactions to the experimental manipulation were assessed to ensure that the information about work-family support provided was being perceived as intended. This manipulation was assessed by one item capturing participant's agreement with the work-family culture present in organizations: "In

your opinion, to what extent are current organizational cultures supportive of work-life

balance?". They responded on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 10 (completely).

Results

Correlations, means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2.

Manipulation checks. The effect of the experimental condition on perceived work-

family support in organizations (our manipulation check) was not statistically significant,

$t(95) = 1.30$, $p=.198$, but the scenarios were rated in the expected direction. The effect sizes

showed that participants in the supportive condition ($M=5.73$; $SD=1.82$) were more likely

than participants in the unsupportive condition ($M=5.26$; $SD=1.65$) to view organizations'

current culture as supportive of family and personal life, Cohen $d = .27$. Manipulation checks

are intended to examine concurrent effects of a manipulation besides the dependent variable

but do not serve as a verification that the manipulated factor caused variation in the dependent

variable. To control for potential effects of participants' expressed agreement with the

growing acceptance of work-life balance requirements by organizations (see Bernerth &

Aguinis, 2016), the variable capturing manipulation checks was included as a control in all

analyses. Additional analyses eliminating these controls yielded equivalent results.

Effects of Work-Family Normative Support. To test Hypothesis 1´s prediction that

supportive norms would improve evaluations of male leaders who requested a leave,

separate 2 (work-family balance norms: supportive vs. unsupportive) × 2 (length of leave:

long vs. short) ANCOVAs were used. Participant age, sex and the perceptions of work-

family balance captured in manipulation checks were used as covariates. The expected

main effects of work-family norms were found in relation to perceived effectiveness, F

$(1,86)=4.21$, $p = .043$, and status, F $(1,84)=4.07$, $p = .047$. Participants in the supportive

condition viewed leaders with a leave as higher in status ($M=5.29$; $SD=1.47$) and more

effective ($M=5.19$; $SD=1.22$) than participants in the unsupportive condition ($M=4.62$;

$SD=1.67$ for status and $M=4.60$; $SD=1.42$ for effectiveness). These analyses provide

support for Hypothesis 1. No effects were observed on perceived power. A significant

effect of leave length emerged in perceived effectiveness, $F(1,86)=4.61$, $p = .035$,

whereby leaders with a short leave (M=5.35; SD=1.19) were perceived as more effective

than leaders with a long leave (M=4.63; SD=1.36).

    Moderating Effects of Participant Sex and Leadership Aspirations. Hypotheses 2

and 3 predicted that a moderator of the effect of work-family norms on evaluations of

leaders would be participant sex and leadership aspirations of participants, respectively.

To test this, a series of separate hierarchical regression analyses were used including

leadership aspirations and participant sex, work-family norms and type of leave (short vs.

long) in the model and controlling for participant age and work-family perceptions. In

order to reduce multicollinearity, the study variables were centered prior to computing the

interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). Analyses capturing potential moderating effects

of participant sex were nonsignificant. In contrast, inclusion of the main effects over the

controls in step two of the regression equation accounted for significant effects of

leadership aspirations on perceived effectiveness (7.7% of additional variance, $p = .023$),

status (10.9% of additional variance, $p = .007$), and power (8.1% of additional variance, p

$= .023$). In all cases, participants with high leadership aspirations (+1SD) reported more

positive ratings of leaders (M=5.22, SD=1.09 for effectiveness, M=5.43, SD=1.52 for

status and M=5.09, SD=1.13 for power) than participants with low leadership aspirations

(-1SD; M=4.68, SD=1.12 for effectiveness, M=4.80, SD=1.55 for status and M=4.65,

SD=1.05 for power). Providing partial support for Hypothesis 3, inclusion of the

interaction effects in step three accounted for 4.1% of additional variance in perceived

status ($p = .046$) and yielded a significant interaction between leadership aspirations of

participants and work-family, $\beta = .88$, $SE = .44$, $p = .046$. The interaction terms were not

significant for effectiveness and power. To further analyze the interaction patterns on

status, simple slopes analyses were conducted (Aiken & West, 1991) – see Figure 1. As

predicted, participants with high leadership aspirations attributed more status to the leader

than participants with low leadership aspirations when they were in the supportive

condition, t (51) = -2.185, *p* = .033. In the unsupportive condition, no differences were

found between participants with high and low aspirations, *t* (36) = 0.313, *p* = .756. In

further inspection of the data, three way interactions between leadership aspirations, work-

family norms and participant sex were conducted, which resulted non-significant.

STUDY 2

Study 2 was designed to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1. In Study 1

we only observed a marginal direct effect of leave length, so this factor remained constant

in Study 2. Because we were interested in the perceptions of male leaders with leaves

outside the standard, we referred to parental leaves that were longer than the statutory

minimum (i.e., two weeks in Spain). Additionally, to rule out the possibility that the

experimental effects of work norms might depend on the sex of the target, leader sex

(male vs. female) was included as a manipulation.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 204 BA students in Spain (100 men,

104 women). Their mean age was 21.03 (*SD* = 3.98), with an average work experience of

one year. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions, resulting in a 2

(work-family norms: supportive vs. unsupportive) × 2 (Leader Sex: male vs. female) × 2

(Participant sex: male vs. female) between-subjects factorial design.

Procedure and manipulations. Participants were asked to complete a paper-and-

pencil questionnaire during regular class sessions with similar instructions to those of

Study 1: they were invited to read a short discussion about recent trends in how work-life

balance is considered in organizations (Appendix 1) and then asked to read the description

of an actual manager in a fictitious company. To avoid giving information about research

objectives, information about the sex of the manager was covert using common Spanish

names (i.e., Alberto vs. Isabel) previously used in research (see Gartzia et al., 2012). The

manager was presented as having recently become a father [mother] and as having

requested to take a longer than average paternity [maternity] leave (between two and

twelve weeks). After reading the description, participants provided an evaluation of the

manager and responded to general issues about their own future in an organization.

Measures

Perceived Effectiveness. Participants evaluated leadership effectiveness with three

items taken from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5/Short Form; Bass &

Avolio, 1995) and adapted to the study. A sample items is "This leader would be effective

in meeting organizational requirements". They evaluated the leader on a scale ranging from

1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Appropriate internal consistency rates were

found for the items included in both variables ($\alpha = .88$).

*Perceived Status and Power***.** Participants evaluated perceived power and status of the

leader with the same items (4 items for power and 3 items for status) used in Study 1

(Galinsky et al., 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008), ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7

(strongly agree). Internal consistency rates were appropriate (power: $\alpha = .85$; status: $\alpha = .86$).

*Leadership Aspirations***.** As in Study 1, participants evaluated their leadership

aspirations with three items from O'Brien (1996) that captured their hope to become a leader

in their career field from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Although a low internal

consistency rate was observed ($\alpha = .56$), the scale was used to keep consistency with Study 1.

Manipulation Checks. Participants' reactions to the manipulation were assessed with

Study 1 item capturing participant's agreement with the work-family culture present in

organizations on a scale from 1 (not at all supportive) to 10 (completely supportive).

Results

Correlations indexes, means and standard deviations are shown in Table 2.

Manipulation checks. The effect of the experimental condition on perceived work-family support (our manipulation check) was significant, $t(200) = 2.11$, $p=.036$. Scenarios were rated as expected: participants in the supportive condition ($M=5.57$; $SD=1.69$) were more likely than participants in the unsupportive condition ($M=5.08$; $SD=1.56$) to view organizations' current culture as supportive of family (Cohen $d = .30$). To keep consistency with Study 1, we included the variable capturing manipulation checks as a control in analyses.

Effects of Work-Family Normative Support. To test Hypothesis 1´s prediction that the perception of a supportive culture would increase positive evaluations of male leaders who used a paternity leave, a series of separate 2 (normative information about work-family balance: supportive vs. unsupportive) × 2 (leader sex: male vs. female) ANCOVAs were used. Participant age, sex and manipulation checks were used as covariates. The expected main effects of work-family norms were nonsignificant. Instead, a main effect of leader sex emerged on perceived status, whereby female leaders ($M=5.07$; $SD=1.25$) were more positively rated than male leaders ($M=4.71$; $SD=1.32$) with a leave.

Moderating Effects of Participant Sex. To examine any differences between men and women in their reactions to work norms (Hypothesis 2), hierarchical regression analyses were performed including work-family norms, leader sex and participant sex and controlling for participant age and work-family perceptions. To reduce multicollinearity, each of the study variables was centered prior to computing the interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). A work norms × participant sex interaction emerged in perceived power, $F(1,186)=6.39$, $p = .012$, and effectiveness, $F(1,190) = 4.04$, $p = .046$. Work norms more strongly influenced male than female participants´ evaluations (Figures 2 and 3). In the supportive culture, men attributed similar effectiveness ($M=4.49$; $SD=1.15$) and power ($M=4.48$; $SD=1.24$) to leaders than women ($M=4.44$; $SD=.94$ for effectiveness and $M=4.33$ $SD=1.10$ for power), $t(103) = -.573$, $p = .568$, Cohen $d= .05$ for effectiveness and $t(100) = -.657$, $p = .513$, Cohen $d= .13$ for power. In the unsupportive culture, sex

differences were higher. Regarding effectiveness, differences did not reach significance but the effect size associated with sex differences was substantially bigger than in the supportive condition (Cohen d=.35) and showed that men attributed less effectiveness (M=4.08; SD=1.24) to leaders with a leave than women (M=4.52; SD=1.29). For power, men´s scores (M=3.90; SD=1.05) were also lower than women´s (M=4.62; SD=1.23), t (92) = 3.02, p = .003, Cohen d=.53.

Moderating Effects of Leadership Aspirations. To test whether leadership aspirations moderate the effects of work norms on evaluations of leaders (Hypothesis 3), hierarchical regression analyses were performed including work-family norms, leadership aspirations, and leader sex and controlling for participant age, work-family perceptions and sex. Replicating Study 1, inclusion of the main effects over controls in step two of the regression equation accounted for significant effects of leadership aspirations on perceived effectiveness (4.1% of additional variance, p = .046), status (7.3% of additional variance, p = .002), and power (8.2% of additional variance, p = .001). In all cases, participants with high leadership aspirations (+1SD) reported more positive ratings of leaders (M=4.47, SD=1.51 for effectiveness, M=5.08, SD=1.46 for status and M=4.80, SD=1.49 for power) than participants with low leadership aspirations (-1SD; M=4.17, SD=1.17 for effectiveness, M=4.59, SD=1.40 for status and M=4.04, SD=1.15 for power). Inclusion of the interaction effects in step three did not account for a statistically significant additional variance in the evaluations. Higher order interactions between leadership aspirations, work-family norms, leader sex and participant sex resulted non-significant.

STUDY 3

In Studies 1 and 2, we measured reactions toward leaders with a leave directly after exposure to the consensus information about how supportive organizations are of work-family. Normative information about work-family in the organization was made available through immediate manipulations but consensual information is often generated from

natural sources, such as peoples' perception of their own company's organizational culture. According to attitude accessibility theory, attitudes are more predictive of behavior when they are easily accessible, in terms of quickly coming to mind on contact with the attitude object (Fazio, 1990). Thus, although our experimental approach served to address questions of causality, such explicit information about normative beliefs might generate effects that differ from those generated by more implicit beliefs about one's own organizational culture (included in Study 3). Finally, although leadership aspirations revealed useful to examine individual differences in how organizational cultures shape people's perceptions of male who request parental leaves, Studies 1 and 2 could not respond to the question of whether such effects are present among people with different actual managerial roles. Study 3 was designed to incorporate these additions on a natural field setting with actual employees and managers assessing the extent to which participants spontaneously attributed levels of work-family support to their organizations. Because in Study 2 we only observed a partial direct effect of leader sex (with male leaders being more negatively rated on perceived status than female leaders with a leave), in Study 3 we focused on our particular interest in the evaluation of male leaders and leader sex remained constant for participants.

Method

Participants and design. Data collection took place in organizations from the metal sector in Southeast Spain. This industrial setting was particularly suitable to capture the specificities of organizational norms regarding masculinity, given the high presence of men and the relatively low availability of work-family measures and support to family policies (Goodstein, 1994). Participants were 287 workers (188 men, 99 women) with an average age of 38.1 years ($SD = 7.54$) and a mean tenure in the company of 9.7 years. The distribution for academic background was: 2.1% had no education title, 13.2% primary studies, 42.2% had completed high school, 37.6% had completed a university degree, and

4.9% had postgraduate studies. In relation to managerial levels, 2.1% reported having a

top managerial position, 10.5% a middle managerial position, 8.1% a low managerial

position, 57.5% a non-managerial white collar position, and 20.7% a non-managerial blue

collar position. The majority of participants had an indefinite job (85.8%) and worked full-

time (80.3%). Regarding family characteristics, most participants (73.9%) were married or

living with a partner, 20.1% were single and 5.3% were separated/divorced. Most

participants had one (24.1%) or two or more children (39.1%).

Procedure. We invited all firms of the metal sector in the Murcia Region and 134

out of 229 agreed to collaborate. The main activities of these firms were metallic

manufacturing, machinery building and metallurgy. Data collection took place through

personal visits, in which surveys were randomly distributed to employees. To reduce bias,

employees were assured that the questionnaires were confidential and their answers were

directly sent to the university in a closed envelope. After responding to demographic

questions and several measures about their jobs gathered for other research purposes,

participants were asked to read a similar description of a male manager similar to the one

included in Study 1. In particular, they were asked to evaluate an anonymous target

manager who worked in their organization. As in Study 1, the (male) manager was

presented as having recently become a father and as having requested to take a paternity

leave of absence to spend time outside work. The standard length for paid paternity leave

in Spain is two weeks (European Commission, 2015), and thus the manager was presented

as having asked more than such standard minimum. After reading the description of the

manager, participants were asked to evaluate the leader and thanked for their participation.

The final sample included 287 responses from 134 firms. Note that 70% of the

organizations included participation of only one or two employees. Because the level 1

sample (employees) size was way too low within each organization to estimate slope

variation and level 2 and level 1 variance would be confounded, we did not include

predictions at the organizational level.

Measures

   Work-Family Supportive Culture. This variable was measured with 5 items

developed by Kofodimos (1995), which are very common in the literature (Burke, 2004;

Burke, Burgess & Fallon, 2006). Employees were asked to indicate how managers in their

organization valued different dimensions associated with work-life balance issues in a

scale ranging from 1(very negatively) to 7(very positively). One item example is the

extent to which "going home during the workday to attend to personal responsibilities

such as a sick child" or "taking extended parental leave" was perceived to be valued in the

organization. An appropriate internal consistency was found for this scale ($\alpha = 0.88$).

   Perceived Effectiveness. Participants evaluated perceived effectiveness of the target

male leader in the company with the same three effectiveness items used in Study 2 from the

MLQ-5/Short Form (Bass & Avolio, 1995), on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7

(strongly agree). An appropriate internal consistency rate were found for the items included

in this variable ($\alpha = .90$).

   Perceived Status and Power. Participants evaluated perceived power and status of the

target male leader in the company with the same 7 items used in Study 1 (Magee & Galinsky,

2008; Galinsky et al., 2003), on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly

agree). Appropriate internal consistency rates were found for the items included in both

variables ($\alpha = .93$ for power and $\alpha = .96$ for status).

   Hierarchichal Level: The employees' managerial position was assessed with a

single item asking participants their current position in a continuum of five hierarchical

levels: top executive, head of department/unit, shift supervisor, non-managerial technical,

and non-managerial administrative. These levels spanned five positions of responsibility

in which higher scores indicated greater levels in the organization hierarchy.

Control Variables: To maximize control over potential confounding and reduce issues of internal validity that are typical of field research, we included and dummy-coded when necessary control variables suggested by prior research regarding both the family and organizational domains. First, we collected background demographic data regarding employees' age and educational level, which have been found to relate to the impact of parental leaves for fathers (Rege & Solli, 2013). For instance, for fathers in more recent birth cohorts –but not older fathers- attitudes toward desirable child care arrangements influence number of hours they put into work (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000). Likewise, there is evidence from sociological research that at similar levels of other demographic variables such as earnings, the more educated fathers used leave more (Sundström & Duvander, 2002). Participants' own family situation might also be associated with evaluations of people taking a parental leave, and thus we controlled for differences in marital status, number of children, and previous use of parental leave over the minimum standard. Organizational variables as job tenure and employment type can also influence perceptions of other employees and thus were also controlled for. Finally, consistent with prior research showing that gender ideology influences perceptions of targets who violate gendered family roles (Gaunt, 2013), this variable was included as an additional control. We measured gender ideology with ten items taken from the Gender Ideology Scale (Moya, Expósito & Padilla, 2006). An example item is "It is natural that men and women perform different roles". Participants responded to these items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An appropriate internal consistency rate was found for the items in this variable ($\alpha = .87$).

Results

Correlations indexes, means and standard deviations for study variables are shown in Table 3. To test our hypotheses, a series of hierarchical regression analyses were used. We first included control variables regarding family-related information [civil status

(married vs. single), number of children, and a dummy variable capturing previous use of paternity/maternity leave over minimum standards (0=no, 1=yes)] and work-related information [tenure in the organization, type of contract (i.e., temporal vs. indefinite), and type of employment (part-time vs. full-time)]. We also controlled for gender ideology and demographic information (participant sex, age, and education level). Following the recommendations of Cohen and Cohen (1983), we entered the control variables in the regression equation before entering the variable of interest. Variables used as a component of interaction terms were centered (Aiken & West, 1991). The several-step hierarchical regressions were performed on each of the dependent variables.

Effects of Work-Family Normative Support. Regarding hypothesis 1´s prediction that a supportive work-family culture would increase employees´ positive evaluations of male leaders with a leave over and above the effects of all control variables, inclusion of the main effects of work-family in step two of the regression equation accounted for an additional 4.2% of the variance over the control variables in perceived effectiveness ($p = .002$), 3.9% in status ($p = .002$), and 4.2% in power ($p = .002$). Analysis of the main effects indicated that work-family culture was a statistically significant predictor of all competence evaluations: perceived effectiveness ($\beta =.25$, SE=.08, $p = .002$), status ($\beta =.24$, SE=.08, $p = .002$), and power ($\beta =.25$, SE=.08, $p = .002$). This effect was in the expected direction: participants in organizations with supportive cultures (+1SD) reported more positive ratings of male leaders with a leave (*M*=5.36, *SD*=1.31 for effectiveness, *M*=5.47, *SD*=1.27 for status, and *M*=4.99, *SD*=1.26 for power) than participants in organizations with unsupportive (-1SD) cultures (*M*=4.46, *SD*=1.60 for effectiveness, *M*=4.40, *SD*=1.72 for status, and *M*=4.19, *SD*=1.72 for power). These findings support Hypothesis 1. Gender ideology emerged as an additional predictor of evaluations on perceived effectiveness ($\beta =.-24$, SE=.10, $p = .019$), status ($\beta =.-24$, SE=.10, $p = .014$), and marginally on power ($\beta =-.16$, SE=.10, $p = .098$). In all cases, participants with more

sexist gender ideologies (+1SD) reported more negative ratings of male leaders with a

leave (*M*=4.06, *SD*=1.42 for effectiveness, *M*=4.21, *SD*=1.49 for status and *M*=4.12,

SD=1.36 for power) than participants with lower sexist gender ideologies (-1SD; *M*=5.07,

SD=1.60 for effectiveness, *M*=5.27, *SD*=1.55 for status and *M*=5.27, *SD*=1.36 for power).

Moderating Effects of Employee Sex. To examine the moderating effect of

employee sex on the relationship between work-family norms and evaluations of male

leaders, hierarchical regression analyses were performed including participant sex as a

moderating variable and controlling for the abovementioned variables. These analyses

produced non-significant effects of participant sex and their interactions with the predictor

variables. Generally speaking, omitting controls that are relevant for a research topic from

regression models can produce misspecification in analyses. However, the inclusion of

certain control variables can also reduce available degrees of freedom and statistical

power, reducing the amount of explainable variance available in outcomes of interest (see

Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016, for a comprehensive review). Given that research looking at

sex differences in either the domain of social norms or evaluations of employees with

leaves have rarely controlled for participant's own use of parental leave (e.g., Allen et al.,

1994; Fleischmann & Sieverding, 2015), additional analyses omitted previous use of

parental leaves as a control from our models, which more easily allowed comparability

with this body of research. Interestingly, in these analyses the expected participant sex ×

work-family support interaction term emerged on perceived power (p = .018; 2.2% of

additional explained variance over controls and main effects of participant sex and work

norms). The interaction term between work-family support and participant sex was a

predictor of power (β =-.38, SE=.16, p = .018). A marginal effect also emerged on status

(p = .050; 1.5% of additional explained variance; β =-.32, SE=.16, p = .050 for the effect

interaction term). Consistent with Study 2, simple slopes (Aiken & West, 1991) showed

that work-family support more strongly influenced male than female employees´

evaluations of male leaders who requested a parental leave (Figure 5). In supportive

cultures, men attributed similar status (M=5.45; SD=1.41) and power (M=5.05; SD=1.33)

to male leaders than women (M=5.50; SD=1.07 for status and M=4.92 SD=1.20 for

power), t (37) = .121, p = .904 for status and t (36) = -.295, p = .770 for power. In

unsupportive cultures, men attributed less status (M=4.08; SD=1.56) and power (M=3.84;

SD=1.59) to male leaders than women (M=5.31; SD=1.88 for status and M=5.13 SD=1.74

for power), t (44) = 2.22, p = .032 for status and t (42) = 2.331, p = .025 for power.

   Moderating Effects of Employees' Leadership Roles. To examine the moderating

effect of actual leadership roles of participants on the relationship between work-family

norms and evaluations of male leaders, additional analyses were used with participants'

organizational roles and work-family culture as predictors. Including or excluding control

variables created a similar pattern of results. Inclusion of the interaction term over all the

controls and main effects in step three of the equation accounted for a marginally

significant moderating effect of leadership roles on the effect of work-family support on

perceived status (1.5% of additional variance, β = .14, SE = .07, p =.059). Simple slopes

analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) conducted on high (+1SD) vs. low (-1SD) scores of

leadership roles showed a crossover interaction, whereby male leaders with a leave were

attributed more status when participants worked in a supportive work-family culture and

had a leadership position in the organization (see Figure 4). These findings provide partial

support for Hypothesis 3.

DISCUSSION

   One of the many available ways to promote men´s domestic behavior and thus

increase gender equality at work is to foster and support the use of work-family measures

and paternity leaves on the part of male employees and managers (Eagly & Carli, 2007;

European Commission, 2015). Several studies have demonstrated that long maternity

permissions have negative consequences on women´s career and earning potentials

(Rønsen & Sundström, 2002). The negative career consequences of maternity leaves for women could be minimized if parental leaves were equally distributed among parents. Yet, men and in particular male leaders who decide to prioritize their domestic life over work duties by taking parental leaves of absence are also severely penalized (Allen et al., 1994; Fleischmann & Sieverding, 2015; Judiesch & Lyness, 1999).

Using a social normative approach, in the present study we delved into an unexplored facet of evaluations of employees and in particular male leaders using long parental leaves, namely contextual variations in the extent to which work-family is supported. In three studies combining experimental and field research, target male leaders were evaluated by participants who varied in the extent to which work-life balance was supported in their immediate work context. Our results generally supported the prediction that normative prescriptions of work-life balance (i.e., a supportive work-family culture) help increase perceived competence of male leaders who request a paternity leave outside the standard. Our findings also suggest that, at least in relation to perceived status (i.e., how well regarded and admirable the supervisor is viewed to be), these effects tend to be stronger for people with higher leadership aspirations and roles. Perceived competence of male leaders with a leave was also found to be higher among people with gender egalitarian ideologies. Participant sex had overall inconsistent effects and in some cases results varied with the inclusion or exclusion of use of parental leave as a control variable (Study 3), suggesting that participant sex might add explained variance when other nonfocal variables associated with work-family issues are not controlled for. When statistically significant effects emerged, the observed findings were in line with our prediction that men´s negative evaluations of male leaders with a leave are more strongly influenced by unsupportive work-life balance cultural norms. Exploratory assessments of how these evaluations vary for male and female leaders (Study 2) showed that leader sex

had overall null effects. The only exception was found in participants´ lower attributions of status to male leaders (vs. female leaders) with a long parental leave.

Theoretical Implications

One relevant contribution of our results is the integration of insights from social normative research and the work-life balance literatures. Social normative theory has proposed important explanations for understanding how people judge and evaluate others based on social norms (Crandall et al., 2002; Sherif, 1963; Stangor et al., 2001), and our work help broaden such conceptual understanding of prejudice in several ways. By focusing on reactions toward male leaders with paternity leaves instead of other social minorities, we reveal that prejudice is not just an issue of reactions against minority groups (e.g., women, black, gays) but that prejudice can occur against people in powerful roles (male leaders) as well. This perspective suggests a new approach to social norms as a relevant source of influence in perceptions of effectiveness in organizations.

The current findings are also consistent with and extend previous research about gender stereotyping in leadership (for a review, see Koenig et al., 2011). This field of research has consistently shown that not only female but also male leaders conform to leadership prototypes consistent with a "think manager-think male" stereotype, whereby stereotypically feminine behavior is penalized and hindered trough organizational cultures and norms (see Koenig et al., 2011). Contributing to this theory, our results reveal that the negative evaluations that employees and particularly managers receive from displaying counter-stereotypical behavior (i.e., use of parental leaves) could be lessened by changing the norms that people adhere to regarding the acceptability of work-family behavior. This conceptual and empirical approach responds to previous calls to clarify the impact of leaves on the evaluation of managers (Judiesch & Lyness, 1999), as well as to previous requests to pay more attention to factors that might buffer against the negative effects of parental leaves of absence (Allen et al., 1994). By integrating insights from social

normative perspectives and work-family theory, we cut new theoretical ground and suggest a fundamental gap in our current understanding of reactions towards people with a leave: the context. These predictions are consistent with effects of perceived consensus on stereotyping (Stangor et al., 2001).

While previous research provides a compelling portrait of the negative consequences of parental leaves for employees (Fleischmann & Sieverding, 2015; Judiesch & Lyness, 1999; Rege & Solli, 2013), we know very little about the antecedents and factors that might serve reduce such consequences in organizations. Therefore, the current focus on identifying organizational factors that allow more positive evaluations of male leaders taking a leave help broaden our conceptual understanding of this phenomenon. Our findings showing that perceptions of a more supportive work-family culture increased employees´ positive evaluations of male leaders with a leave are consistent with prior research showing the impact that a supportive work-family culture can have for employees utilization of work-family policies (Darcy et al., 2012; Perlow, 1995).

Because perceptions of leaders' competence can influence their ability to influence followers and get results (Bass & Avolio, 1995), our theorizing and focus on male leaders can articulate new understandings about how work-family supportive discourses can modulate peoples´ behavior in organizations. Extending the work-family literature, our results thus suggest that organizational norms can go beyond direct use of work-family policies and have more subtle effects in organizational behavior by influencing competence perceptions of people (i.e., leaders) using such policies. The focus on male leaders is particularly noteworthy, given the comparatively lower attention placed on the topic in previous research. Likewise, our findings that perceived status of managers with parental leaves might be higher as proximity to leadership roles increases extends previous research showing that implicit pressures to conform to organizational norms tend to be higher for people with managerial responsibilities (Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Voss et al.,

2006). These effects can explain some of the inconsistencies of previous research, which has found not only negative (Allen et al., 1994; Fleischmann & Sieverding, 2015; Judiesch & Lyness, 1999) but also positive (Correll, Bernard & Paik, 2007; Fuegen et al., 2004; Hersch & Stratton, 2000; Hodges & Budig, 2010) reactions towards men with domestic responsibilities.

Practical Implications

The way work-family decisions of leaders are perceived by other employees and managers in organizations affect many important organizational decisions and processes. When evaluating leaders, followers are influenced by implicit leadership theories and shared beliefs about appropriate leader behaviors and therefore their responses are clearly affected by implicit prototypes about leaders (Lord, Vader & Alliger, 1986). Our results demonstrate that contextual factors associated with the cultural values of an organization may play a critical role in understanding individual perceptions toward leaders and thus invite organizations to actively enable more supportive normative views of work-family balance, in order to enable novel prototypes of effective leadership. These new perspectives go beyond the notion that the most committed and effective managers are those who spend more hours at work. Because work performance and the recruitment and retention of talented employees is not necessarily linked to work hours but to employees' satisfaction at work and in their lives more generally (Allen, 2001), such a perspective might in the long term be beneficial for organizations.

Because work-life balance is increasingly more relevant and an increasingly higher number of men and male managers are taking paternity leaves than in the past (European Commission, 2015; US Department of Labor, 2015), companies that can generate positive work expectations about such employees are in a better position to cope with the many challenges that leadership is facing in the new century. Of course, promoting norms that help reduce stigmatization against managers who decide to take leaves might also help

reduce men's trend to take only brief leaves of absence and ultimately reduce women's discrimination at work. These norms can be explicit (e.g., changes in mission, vision and formal statements of the company) or implicit as for instance organizational expectations about the use of time and informal rules about the number of hours that employees are expected to spend at work (Bailyn, 1993). Working long hours is often mistakenly taken as a key indicator of commitment and productivity (Bailyn, 1993; Lewis & Taylor, 1996; Perlow, 1995), so instructing employees about alternative ways of using time and effectively managing work hours by for instance working with a timekeeper or setting a fixed time to end a meeting efficiently might be specific ways of mitigating negative reactions against people who efficiently combine work and family responsibilities.

Because leaders are particularly influential reference points for employees and can impact different aspects of employees´ self-concept (Lord & Brown, 2004), explicit comments and behavior from middle level male managers who can serve as role models would be particularly useful. Ideally, stereotyped evaluations would also lessen in companies in which taking paternity leaves is explicitly recognized and valued by for instance actively promoting such unconventional behavior or using fathers´ parental leave as a marketing, reputation tool (e.g., see example of Twitter at https://fairygodboss.com/articles/twitter-s-parental-leave-policy-something-tweet-worthy). Given that the large majority of work interventions have focused almost exclusively on women's domestic life, such an approach would be a distinctive policy in todays' competitive environment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our findings suggest that work-family support should become normative in order to activate more positive mental imageries of work-life balance that can be subsequently activated when evaluating people in organizational roles. Yet, our study did not address the various ways in which work-family information can become normative at work. Lamb

and Tamis-LeMonda (2004) examined the barriers that working fathers report for their paternal involvement and, among the difficulties that fathers reported is their perception that business cultures do not support employees in the actual use of work-family measures. Similarly, Seierstad and Kirton (2015) found with a sample of politicians and managers in Norway that users of work-family measures had been excluded from important decisions and promotion processes due to conversations taking place after normal working hours. These informal practices represent other forms of normative behavior in organizations that were not captured in the current study. Future research can further pin down the exact ways in which work-family normative behavior can occur.

Although the current findings open up the possibility that negative evaluations of male leaders with a leave are limited to organizational contexts with an unsupportive work-family culture, we cannot definitely state that more explicit recognitions of work-family balance translate into more positive evaluations of leaders. In our studies, clear differences emerged between different facets of leaders' perceived competence: whereas the effects of supportive norms were generally consistent across studies for all the variables of perceived competence, the moderating effects of leadership aspirations and roles only emerged in relation to perceived status across Studies 1 and 3, suggesting that more research would be necessary to reach definite conclusions. Although all power, effectiveness and status are fundamental dimensions of leadership, they represent in essence very different facets of competence. Perceived effectiveness entails broad considerations about a leaders' ability to perform effectively in managerial roles, whereas power captures a leaders' ability to have control over resources and status entails subjective feelings of respect and admiration towards the leader (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Consistent with this research, our findings suggest that there are conceptual differences in how involved leaders are valued in these facets.

The fact that our predictions were more consistently supported in the facet of status suggests that the effects that cultural norms can generate on evaluations of leaders who request leaves outside the standard are stronger in relation to socio-emotional elements, given that status more clearly represents an index of the social worth, respect and admiration (Galinsky et al., 2003). This is consistent with research showing that status is more strongly influenced by the judgments of observers than power (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Because people with high leadership roles and aspirations are in principle more likely than other employees to ascribe value to managerial roles, a research question that emerges is whether the moderating effect of managerial roles on perceived status is specific to evaluations that involve feelings of respect and admiration, rather than actual perceptions of competence. Similarly, because Study 2 findings showed that male leaders with a leave were only more negatively evaluated than female leaders in relation to status, the examination of whether and how these emotional components might also influence gender discrimination is an additional avenue for research.

Our failure to find consistent differential effects for male and female participants also leaves important concerns about the effects of observers´ sex on perceived evaluations of leaders with a leave. The moderating effects of sex only reached significance in Study 2, whereby male participants´ negative evaluations of leaders with a leave were more strongly influenced by unsupportive norms compared to those of female participants. Interestingly, in Study 3 (which consisted on a sample of actual male and female employees), a significant effect of participant sex only emerged when participants' own use of parental leave was not controlled for, suggesting that analyses excluding this important variable might have mistakenly attributed individual differences to observers' sex, when actually other individual variables are involved. Because it is usually women who take -and expect to take (Gartzia & Fetterolf, 2016)- parental leaves, sex and use of leaves may often function as similar variables, but future research controlling for and explicitly examining these effects

could lend better understanding of the –often magnified- effects of sex (see Bernerth & Aguinis for a discussion about the theoretical and practical implications of inclusion or exclusion of control variables). Another issue to consider is that participants in Studies 1 and 2 were students, contrasted to actual employees and managers in Study 3. Potential differences between these profiles might be worth of specific study in future research. In our study, we examined perceived evaluations of middle management leaders but the organization hierarchy might definitely make a difference in how leaders are perceived when using parental leaves. Future studies incorporating these nuances would be valuable. Finally, cross-cultural limitations that typically apply to studies conducted in a single cultural context also limit the generalizability of our findings to other contexts outside Spain (see Gartzia & Lopez-Zafra, 2014, 2015, for specificities about Spain in the European context).

CONCLUSION

All in all, the current findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersections between organizational norms, gender stereotypes and work-family issues at work. Although there are undoubtedly many variables to be covered that might bring insight about how to promote more egalitarian and work-family friendly workplaces, in our study organizational norms proved to be an important factor able to improve competence perceptions of male leaders who request parental leaves beyond the regular standard. This approach offers an opportunity for further exploration of organizational and individual factors that might buffer against the negative reactions that occur against men with domestic interests, which are ultimately detrimental for women´s advancement in organizations. Importantly, we propose more positive understandings of prejudice against male leaders using leaves and suggest that the violation of gender stereotypes should not necessarily yield negative effects in leadership, as long as supportive norms are provided.

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Table 1. *Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables (Study 1)*

	M	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	21.88	3.91	1						
2. Manipulation Checks	0.00	1.75	-.08	1					
3. Participant Sex	0.57	0.49	.12	.07	1				
4. Leave Lenght	1.54	0.50	-.13	-.03	.05	1			
5. Work-Family Culture	0.56	0.49	-.01	.13	.13	-.08	1		
6. Perceived Effectiveness	4.92	1.33	.17†	.00	.11	-.24*	.21*	1	
7. Perceived Status	4.96	1.51	.14	.06	.15	-.08	.22*	.85**	1
8. Perceived Power	4.75	1.12	.12	.10	.01	-.07	-.01	.47**	.44**

Note. N=97; $**$ $p < .01$; $*p < .05$; $†$ $p < .10$; Participant Sex: 0 = Male, 1= Female.

Table 2. *Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables (Study 2)*

	M	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	21,03	3,99	1							
2. Manipulation Checks	5,34	1,65	.02	1						
3. Participant Sex	0,51	0,50	.08	-.04	1					
4. Leader Sex	0,53	0,50	-.10	.10	-.04	1				
5. Work-Family Culture	0,53	0,50	-.18*	.15*	-.09	.12†	1			
6. Perceived Effectiveness	4,38	1,19	.11	.07	.05	.09	.05	1		
7. Perceived Status	4,90	1,29	.09	.00	.10	.14†	.04	.52**	1	
8. Perceived Power	4,36	1,19	.03	.02	.11	.02	.05	.61**	.49**	1
9. Leadership Aspirations	4,23	0,70	.02	-.02	-.03	-.03	-.14*	.16*	.19**	.25**

Note. N=204; $^{**} p < .01$; $^{*} p < .05$; $^{†} p < .10$; Participant Sex: 0 = Male, 1= Female; Leader Sex: 0 = Male, 1= Female; Work-Family Culture: 0 =

Unsupportive , 1=Supportive.

Table 3. *Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables (Study 3)*

	M	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Age	38.14	7.54	1														
2. Sexism	2.23	1.05	.16**	1													
3. Employee Sex	0.34	0.47	-.16**	-.16**	1												
4. Education	3.30	0.83	-.12*	-.33**	.18**	1											
5. Contract type	0.86	0.35	.25**	-.03	-.00	-.08	1										
6. Employment Type	0.80	0.39	.10	-.04	-.24**	.01	.11	1									
7. Tenure	9.68	6.28	.43**	.04	-.08	-.12*	.35**	.04	1								
8. Marital Status	1.33	0.60	-.12*	.00	.13*	.04	-.11	-.02	-.07	1							
9. Number of children	1.09	0.98	.47**	.13*	-.11	-.10	.16**	.04	.30**	-.37**	1						
10. Previous maternity leave	0.06	0.22	-.04	.03	.09	-.00	.04	-.17**	.05	-.09	.03	1					
11. Previous paternity leave	0.04	0.19	-.10	.11	.13*	-.02	.02	-.00	.02	-.06	-.04	.42**	1				
12. Work-Family Culture	3.81	1.19	-.07	-.01	.06	-.06	-.07	.03	-.10	.00	-.02	.10	.12*	1			
13. Hierarchical position	3.87	0.96	-.06	.11	.00	-.43**	-.05	-.14*	-.03	-.05	-.09	.03	.09	.08	1		
14. Perceived Effectiveness	4.50	1.44	-0.00	-0.14*	0.01	0.43	0.05	-0.00	0.06	-0.00	0.40	0.12*	0.06	0.16**	-0.07	1	
15. Perceived Status	4.67	1.46	-0.06	-0.15*	0.08	0.07	0.04	-0.02	0.03	-0.05	0.01	0.14*	0.08	0.19**	-0.01	0.75**	1
16. Perceiv ed Power	4.39	1.40	-0.03	-0.13*	0.03	0.86	-0.01	0.55	0.04	0.01	-0.02	0.12*	0.08	0.19**	-0.08	0.66**	0.67**

Note. *N*=287; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; † $p < .10$; Participant Sex: 0 = Male, 1= Female; Education: 1= No studies, 2= Elementary, 3= Secondary. 4=University, 5 = Post graduate, Contract type: 1= Unlimited, 2= Temporary, Employment Type: 1= Full time/ 2= Part time, Marital Status: 1= Married, 2= Single, 3= Separated/Divorced, 4= Widower. Hierarchical position: 1= Top executive, 2= Head of Department or unit, 3= Shift supervisor, 4= Technical job, 5= Administrative.
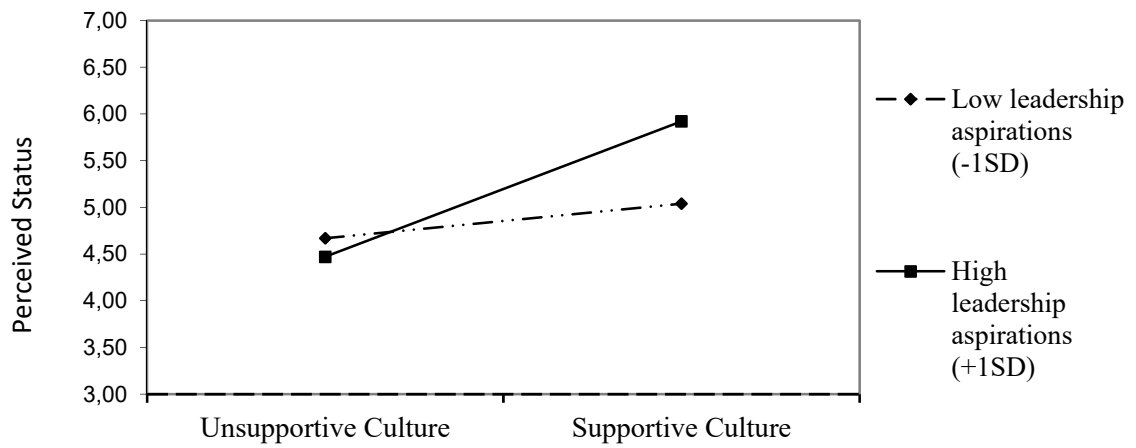
Figure 1. Interactive Effect of Social Norms and Leadership Aspirations on Perceived

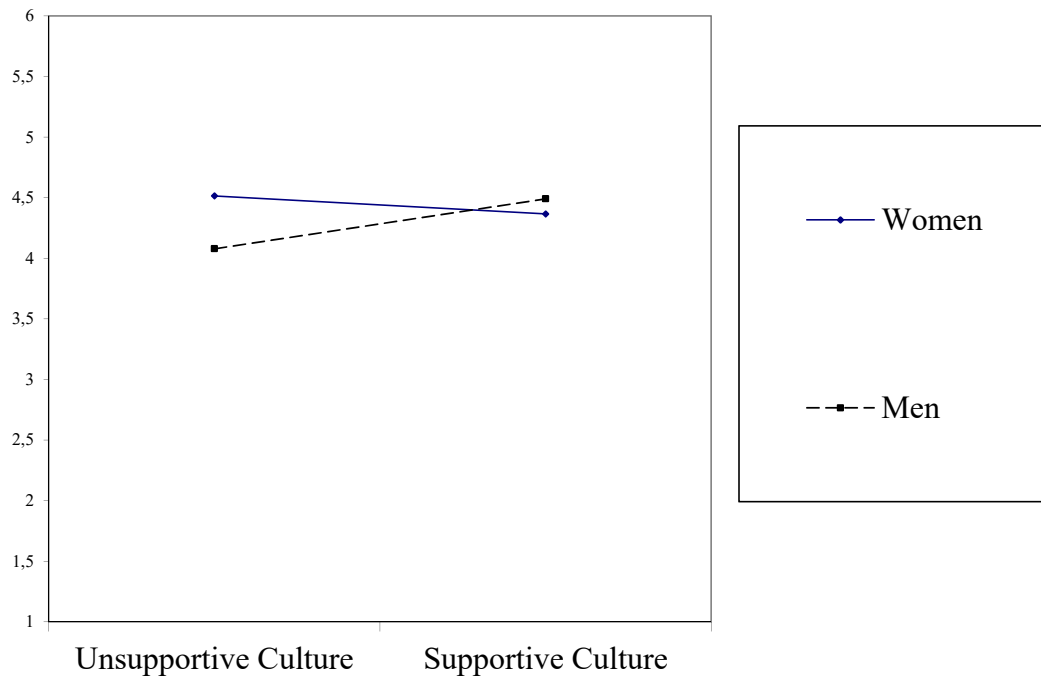Status of Male Leaders who Request a Parental Leave (Study 1)

Figure 2. Interactive Effect of Social Norms and Participant Sex on Perceived

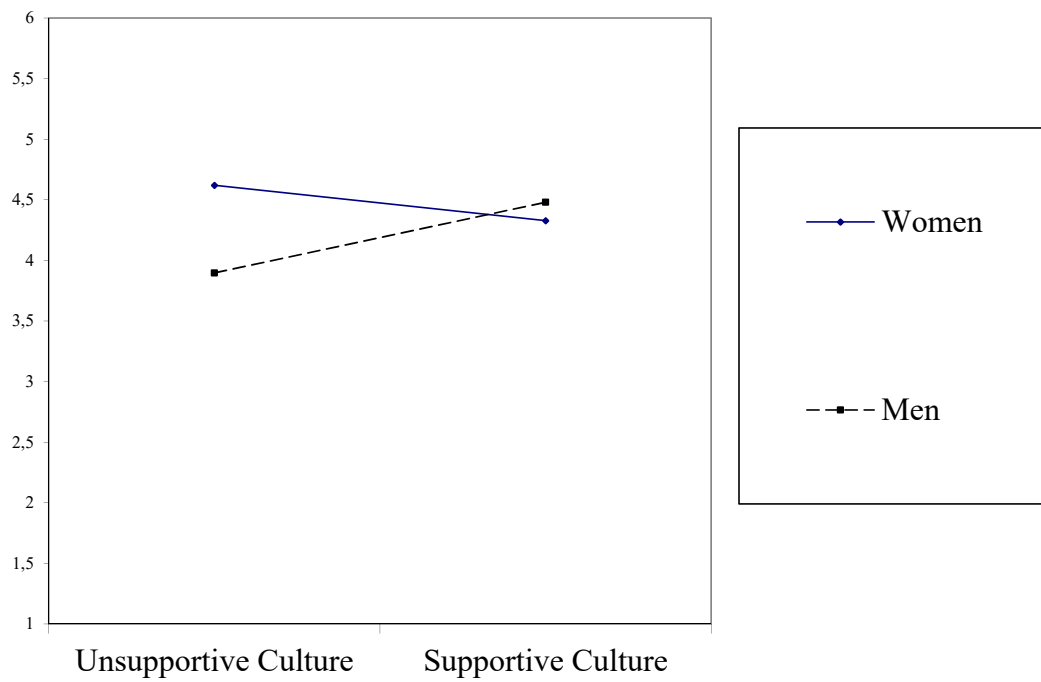Effectiveness of Leaders who Request a Parental Leave (Study 2).

Figure 3. Interactive Effect of Social Norms and Participant Sex on Perceived Power of
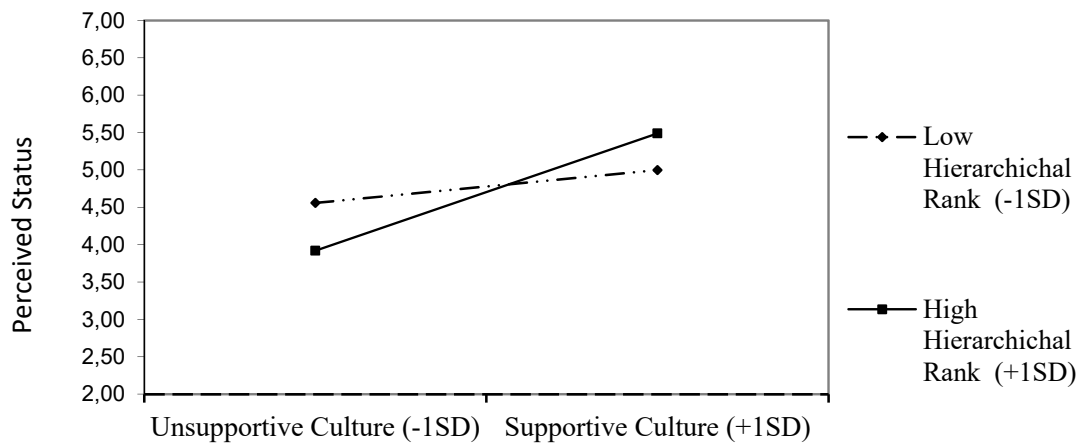
Leaders who Request a Parental Leave (Study 2).

Figure 4. Interactive Effect of Social Norms and Leadership Position in the Organization

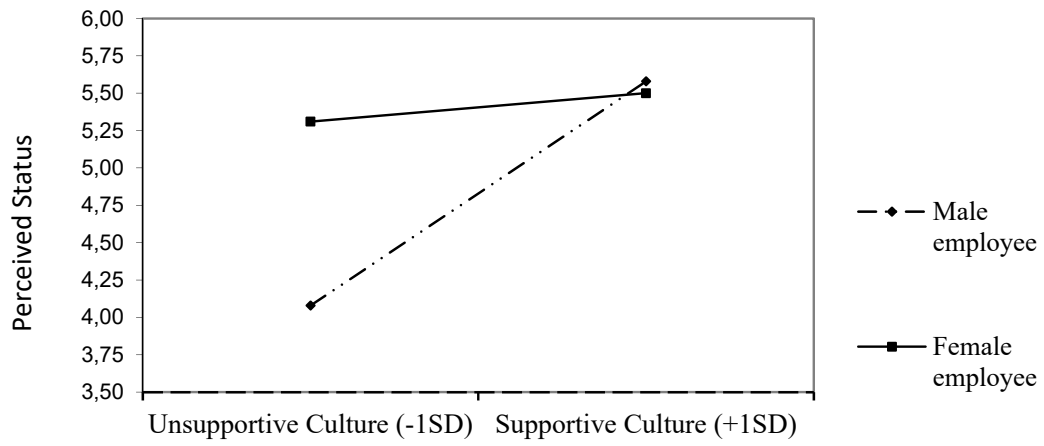on Perceived Status of Male Leaders who Request a Parental Leave (Study 3)

Figure 5. Interactive Effect of Social Norms and Participant Sex on Perceived Status of

Male Leaders who Request a Parental Leave (Study 3)

Appendix 1

Study 2 Social Norms Manipulations

Scenario 1: Unsupportive Condition

 [According to a recently published study, many companies in our country do not look favorably on the absence from work due to balance between work and personal life. This trend is particularly problematic for prolonged leaves that imply taking care of children or other dependents. In response to this trend, a large number of leading companies have specific management policies to identify workers who are most committed to the organization and reward their achievement of career-related goals].

Scenario 2: Supportive Condition

[According to a recently published study, many companies in our country are beginning to positively view employees´ work life balance, allowing them to use permissions to be absent from work and take care of children or other dependents. A clear example of this trend is the large number of leading companies that have specific management policies to allow their workers spend more time at home and thus better respond to family and personal responsibilities.]