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Too Masculine, Too Bad: Effects of Communion on Leaders' Promotion of Cooperation

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Abstract

This study challenges researchers and practitioners in the field of leadership to consider communion as a relevant variable for (male) leadership effectiveness. We suggest that communal traits influence the ability of male leaders to engender cooperation and that this effect is stronger in male-dominated contexts. We argue that this is because relevant traits and leadership behaviors that underscore a sense of community are associated with stereotypically feminine roles and identity. In a series of three studies, experimental as well as survey-based, using Spanish, Dutch, and American samples, we examined such gendered construction of male leadership and its effects on cooperation. Among others, results are discussed in terms of how stereotypically masculine constructions of male leadership may create barriers to effective leadership.

Keywords

leadership, gender, cooperation, identity

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Organizations function in a network of relationships where solely serving individual interest is to the detriment of the organization as a whole. Cooperation, which requires working interdependently toward a common goal, is directly linked to this and constitutes a key process for organizations (Katz, 1964). In the same way, engendering cooperative relationships among followers has been highlighted as one of the most important leadership functions (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002). By fostering a sense of support and care for each other, leaders shift the emphasis from the pursuit of solely individual to organizational interests, thus fostering cooperation and devoting extra time and energy to interdependent tasks and actions.

Whereas cooperation is consequential for leadership effectiveness, there are gender-related mechanisms that might hinder its occurrence. In contrast to women, men are less cooperative and often find it difficult to see themselves as part of an altruistic network of relations and to contribute to others' welfare (Eckel & Grossman, 1996; Gilligan, 1982). One possible explanation lies in the psychological *communal* and *agentic* qualities that are ascribed to female and male categories (i.e., gender), which result in men's lower communal orientation (Spence & Buckner, 2000). Because cooperation requires displaying many communal qualities that are female-typed, such as offering help, being receptive of others' emotions and opinions, and working toward consensus for the good of the group, cooperation may be hindered by the prevalence of stereotypically masculine qualities in leadership.

In the present study, we examined how stereotypically masculine (i.e., agentic) male leaders promote less cooperation among followers than stereotypically feminine (i.e., communal) male leaders. We focus on male leadership because most studies on gender at work have been women-focused and have disregarded the negative effect that stereotyped masculinities may play in leadership effectiveness (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Connell, 2005; Nayak, 2006) and in the sociology of gender at work (Bird, 2003; Martin, 2001). The communion/agency conceptual framework (Bem, 1974; Leszczynski & Strough, 2008; Spence & Buckner, 2000) is also central in our analysis because it reflects key *gendered* aspects of personality that influence men and women's identity and behavior in a way that goes above and beyond other leadership conceptualizations. We propose that communion influences male leaders' ability to promote cooperation among their followers, whereby communal male leaders promote more cooperation than agentic male leaders. This prediction is tested in three studies, of which Study 3 also examines more complex relationships aimed at exploring additional mediation relationships: whether the positive influence of communal male leaders on followers' cooperation occurs by rendering

more communal aspects of their identity salient, and whether the negative effect of agentic definitions of leadership is specially marked in male-dominated environments.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Gender, Leadership, and Cooperation

Contemporary descriptions of managers focus on leadership as shared and relational (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Yukl, 2012). Arguably, one of the key defining characteristics here is the ability to unite followers in pursuit of a common goal, mission, or vision (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Cooperation is a core element in this (Katz, 1964), and engendering cooperation is key to the effectiveness of many leadership efforts (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002), where effectiveness is understood as the leaders' ability to impact followers' individual or group behavior (e.g., Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995; Fiedler, 1967; Yukl, 2012).

Analyses of cooperation put a clear emphasis on the relational aspects of group membership that invite one to take the collective interest to heart, underscoring the importance of a sense of community, belongingness, and interpersonal relations (Blader & Tyler, 2009; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002; Kramer, 1991).

In terms of the leadership challenge of stimulating cooperation, this puts a premium on the relational and communal aspects of leadership. Interestingly and importantly, these relational dimensions are associated more with feminine gender roles than with masculine gender roles (for a comprehensive review, see Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). Men have a lower disposition to create social networks and a higher tendency to make competitive choices in social dilemmas (Wildschut, Pinter, Vevea, Insko, & Schopler, 2003). Men also show a higher social dominance orientation than women (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001), engage more frequently in competitive between-group interactions (Pemberton, Insko, & Schopler, 1996), and emphasize the rights of the individual over those of the group framing their environment as a system of competitive relations (Gneezy, Niederle, & Rustichini, 2003). This helps to explain why male leaders also tend to be less interpersonally oriented than women (Eagly et al., 2014; Kark, 2004).

Sex differences in cooperation-related variables are also reflected in social values. In general, women give more importance than men to the values of benevolence and universalism, which refer to the understanding and protection for the welfare of others (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). Because people expect men to be less cooperative, men are less likely to

transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal (Kark, 2004). As a result of their less communal characteristics, men also tend to be less concerned with the needs of others (Ortmann & Tichy, 1999) and less interested in fair outcomes (Eckel & Grossman, 1996).

Beyond Sex: The Gendered Nature of Male Leadership

Much of the above-mentioned research has focused on examining sex differences in leadership outcomes and processes and has been women-focused. However, because most leaders in organizations are men and adjust to the conventional form of masculinity (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Eagly & Carli, 2007), one of the critical issues may be how stereotypically masculine definitions of male leadership have a negative effect on leadership effectiveness, both for male and female employees. A key issue to realize here is that sex and gender are not the same. Whereas sex refers to biological and physical substrates, gender refers to a broad social system in which roles and stereotypes are immersed, and which determine identity and behavior as a function of social experiences related not only to sex but also to its meaning in the social context (Ragins, 1989; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Accordingly, male leaders as well as female leaders may differ in the extent to which they display stereotypically masculine or stereotypically feminine traits, which may subsequently influence followers' gendered behavior.

Most of the efforts that social psychologists have invested in understanding gender include the concepts of *agency* and *communion*. These terms were introduced by Bakan (1966) to denote two fundamental psychological orientations of human beings. Agency is mainly related to the perspective of the self and is reflected in thoughts and behaviors associated with ambition, competitiveness, or dominance; communion, in contrast, is related to the consideration of others and is associated with concern with interpersonal relationships, strivings to integrate the self in a larger social group, or caring for others (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). These basic orientations reflect the traditional "masculine" and "feminine" dimensions of the self, which are differentially developed during life as a result of gender roles and as such become central to self-concept (Eagly, 1987; Spence & Buckner, 2000).

We chose to frame our study from the perspective of *gender* and thus rely on agency and communion as predictors of male leaders' promotion of cooperation for several reasons. In contrast to other leadership conceptualizations such as people or task orientation, sex differences in communion and agency tend to be

consistent and have been found to be vital drivers of behavior in a variety of life domains, thereby constituting particularly powerful precursors of sex differences in relevant individual and group processes (Dambrun, Duarte, & Guimond, 2004). For instance, Ritter (2004) found that communal men perform better than agentic men on verbal processing tasks on which women generally outperform men. Similarly, sex differences favoring women in people-oriented leadership styles have been found to be at least in part explained by male leaders' lower identification with communal traits (Gartzia & van Engen, 2012).

Communion and agency also represent opposite sides in relation to the basic mechanisms that drive cooperation, namely, focus on the self and individual interests versus focus on other people and their common welfare. These nuances are not captured in the above-mentioned leadership conceptualizations of task and people orientation, which include a broader set of activities such as motivating and developing subordinates' skills, delegating work, focusing on the work to be done, requiring subordinates to follow procedures, or ensuring achievement of organizational goals (Bakan, 1966; Bass, 1985). The confirmation that male leaders' profile in terms of agency and communion hinder cooperation would also have critical implications for practitioners as agency and communion constitute a set of sex-linked personality traits reflected in people's behavior that are much more open to and subject to change than biological sex (Spence & Buckner, 2000). As such, changes in male leaders' communal and agentic orientation might more easily produce changes in their ability to promote cooperation.

According to the *Think Manager–Think Male* stereotype (for a review, see Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011), the combination of traits associated with successful managers coincides with agentic, stereotypically masculine characteristics. As a result of this stereotype, men and women at management positions are often called to display agentic characteristics such as self-confidence, competitiveness, achievement orientation, and ambition, placing the emphasis on competition, hierarchy, and directive behaviors (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Miner, 1993). Furthermore, in many organizations, incorporating communal traits is often avoided (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Metcalfe & Linstead, 2003). These findings suggest that in many work contexts, the "default" leadership referent is a stereotypically masculine man, in terms of high agency and low communion. The communal dimensions related to cooperation are particularly likely to be given less value in contexts with a higher proportion of stereotypically masculine men (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Gerber, 2009). In contrast, a communal male leader may serve as a unique reference for observers to display cooperative behaviors. Based on the previous, we propose that male leaders' endorsement of stereotypically feminine traits and behavior (i.e., communion) is a predictor of cooperation.

Hypothesis 1: Communal male leaders engender higher levels of cooperation among followers than agentic male leaders.

A relevant question here is also whether the benefits of a communal style also hold for female leaders. Our conceptual base suggests that these benefits derive from the leaders' traits and actions and not from the leader's sex, and thus they should also hold for female leaders. Even so, research has established that an individual's sex influences perceptions of the individual's actions. We therefore designed Studies 1 and 2 to compare the influence of communal versus agentic leadership on follower cooperation. Our prediction is that leader's communal and agentic orientations (i.e., *gender*) will influence cooperation regardless of *sex*: a main effect of gender and a nonsignificant sex by gender interaction. To avoid basing conclusions on the *absence* of an effect (i.e., the nonsignificance of the interaction), we specify our prediction to entail an effect of gender for both male and female leaders, and accordingly, the main test of our hypothesis is the simple effect of gender for male leaders and for female leaders even when we expect the interaction not to be significant.

Overview of Studies to Test Hypothesis 1

Three studies were conducted to test Hypothesis 1. Study 1 was an experiment involving American and Dutch students who indicated their willingness to collaborate with male leaders who differed in gender behavior (i.e., communal vs. agentic). To also test for the effect of leader sex and extend our results to female leaders, we kept everything constant except leader sex and leader communal versus agentic orientation, which allows for causal conclusions. This set-up, however, cannot address the question of whether the leadership advantage of communal leadership in engendering cooperation is also observed in ongoing leader–follower relationships in the field. Study 2 therefore used a survey of 400 U.S. workers and examined the extent to which practicing male and female managers who differed in communal and agentic behavior engender different degrees of cooperation among their actual subordinates. The drawback of Study 2 in itself is that it is correlational, and moreover that it cannot rule out alternative readings of sex effects—or, their absence—as well as Study 1. In Study 3, we included a behavioral measure of cooperation (i.e., the Prisoner's Dilemma) and relied on an experimental manipulation with a sample of employees from a variety of Spanish organizations. This experimental approach allowed us to examine more complex relationships aimed at exploring mediation relationships in a field-experimental context (relationships for which the hypotheses will be presented at the introduction of Study 3).

Study I

Participants and Design

Participants were 119 undergraduate students enrolled at U.S. and Dutch universities (67 males, 52 females). Mean age was 20.08 ($SD = 1.75$). We implemented a 2 (male vs. female) \times 2 (communal vs. agentic) experimental manipulation of leadership characteristics, whereby participants were invited to place themselves in the situation of working in a real organization with a leader about whom they received information. Subsequently, they were asked to evaluate how they would respond to certain issues in their job taking into account the characteristics of that specific leader.

Procedure and Manipulation of the Gender Traits of the Leader

Participants were randomly provided with one of four versions of the questionnaire, in which they were presented with a brief description of the leader. From the name in the descriptions, it was apparent that the leader was either male (Brian) or female (Karen). Stereotypically masculine candidates were described with agentic traits taken from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), such as ambitious, independent, and competitive. Communal candidates were described with traits such as kind, empathetic, and caring. We included five traits in each description. The following is an example of such a description:

Brian is a self-confident, decisive, goal-oriented and ambitious man who tends to stand up under pressure and to be very competitive and independent.

Measures

Cooperation. We included two complementary types of cooperation: cooperation with the manager and cooperation with coworkers in the leader's team. To measure willingness to cooperate with the manager, we used a six-item scale developed by Van Hiel, De Cremer, and Stouven (2008) in which participants indicate the extent to which they would like to cooperate with the fictitious manager in a next project/task. An example is "If I worked with him/her, I would be willing to provide help on additional tasks." Willingness to cooperate with coworkers was measured using the interpersonal helping dimension of the organizational citizenship scale employed by Moorman and Blakely (1995), which has shown validity loading on the hypothesized factors without cross-loadings and to be resistant to the effects of sample size

(cf. De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002). We adapted this five-item scale to the context of study. An example is “In the team she/he supervised, I would go out of my way to help coworkers with work-related problems.” Cronbach’s alphas were .83 and .86, respectively.

Results

Results of a 2 (leader gender) \times 2 (leader sex) ANCOVA controlling for sex of participant showed only the expected main effect of leader gender. This effect was found in relation to cooperation with the leader, $F(1, 111) = 24.95, p = .001$, and cooperation with other members in the group, $F(1, 113) = 72.03, p = .001$. Participants were more likely to cooperate with communal ($M = 5.02, SD = 0.46$) than agentic leaders ($M = 4.41, SD = 0.83$), Cohen’s $d = 0.91$, and they were also more likely to cooperate with other members when the leader was communal ($M = 4.44, SD = 0.70$) than agentic ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.72$), Cohen’s $d = 1.55$. No other effects were significant (all $Fs < 1.76, ps > .19$).

To further examine these relationships and test whether communal leaders were indeed more effective in promoting cooperation than agentic leaders regardless of sex, we also tested simple main effects and analyzed whether these were significant for male and female leaders. In particular, we tested the effect of leader gender within each level of leader sex using MANOVA with the entire sample. Results showed that participants were more likely to cooperate with communal female leaders than with agentic female leaders, $F(1, 113) = 14.95, p = .001$. Moreover, participants were more likely to cooperate with communal male leaders than with agentic male leaders, $F(1, 113) = 12.37, p = .002$. In relation to cooperation with other members in the group, results showed that participants were more likely to cooperate with other members when they were under a communal female leader than an agentic female leader, $F(1, 113) = 45.36, p = .001$, and under a communal male leader than an agentic male leader, $F(1, 113) = 27.35, p = .001$.

Study 2

Study 1 provided the first demonstration that stereotypically feminine male leaders (i.e., communal) engender more cooperation than stereotypically masculine male leaders (i.e., agentic). In addition, we tested these effects with female leaders and observed the same results; communal female leaders engendered more cooperation than agentic female leaders. The experimental nature of this study served to prove causality and to control the actual representation of different leaders that varied in their gender traits and sex, thereby helping to overcome the many limitations associated with subjective ratings of leadership.

Yet, Study 1 relied on an experimental manipulation with students and a hypothetical leader, which only indirectly speaks to cooperation as influenced by leadership relationships as they obtain in organizations. Study 2 was therefore designed to overcome these limitations with a sample of practicing managers and employees by evaluating leaders' agency and communion as reflected in their actions and behavior. This approach protected us from limiting our analyses to leader traits and served to examine the behavioral dimension of agency and communion of real leaders and their subordinates from a correlational perspective. Again, we expected to find simple effects of leader gender on cooperation, and that these effects would not be moderated by leader sex.

Participants and Design

Participants were 400 employees from business organizations in the United States (259 female, 141 male) recruited through an online panel. Participants had to rate their current manager on gender traits and indicate the extent to which they cooperated with him or her. Participants were selected so that 200 were subordinates of a male leader and the other 200 were subordinates of a female leader. Mean age for participants was 47.75 ($SD = 13.49$). Managers presented the following age distribution: 1.8% were aged 18 to 25, 12.5% were aged 26 to 35, 25% were aged 36 to 45, 33% 46 to 55, 19.8% 56 to 65, and the remaining 8% were older than 65. Participants responded to the questionnaires online. To ensure the quality of responses, participants who took less than 40% of the estimated completion time or showed an abnormally low variance in their responses were excluded (Galesic & Bosnjak, 2009).

Measures

Cooperation. To assess cooperation, we again adapted the interpersonal helping scale of the Moorman and Blakely (1995). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was good (.91).

Leader gender. This variable was assessed using the Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire (EPAQ; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), which is made up of 16 traits (8 for communion, 8 for agency). Factor analyses across several samples have suggested a single-factor solution for each scale and construct validity (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). We adapted the traits to reflect their behavioral facet. An example item for agency is "She/he behaves competitively," and for communion "She/he behaves in a warm way with people." The coefficient alphas for these subscales were .92 for communion and .74 for agency, indicating that reliability was acceptable.

Table 1. Correlations for Study Variables (Study 2; N = 400).

	1	2	3	4
1. Communion	1			
2. Agency	.49**	1		
3. Cooperation	.71**	.42**	1	
4. Leader sex	-.04	-.03	.01	1
5. Participant sex	.01	-.04	.03	.38**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Cooperation (Study 2; N = 400).

Step	Variables	β	R^2	R^2 change	F change	df
1			.001	.001	.161	2,397
	Leader sex	-.003				
	Participant sex	.029				
2			.519	.518	213.03**	4,395
	Communion	.666**				
	Agency	.100*				
3			.522	.002	.464	8,391
	Leader Sex \times Communion	-.042				
	Leader Sex \times Agency	.001				

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Results

Before testing for effects on cooperation, sex differences for leader gender were examined. Results of an ANCOVA with leader sex controlling for sex of participant showed no statistically significant effects of leader sex on their levels of communion, $F(1, 397) = 0.97$; $p = .32$, or agency, $F(1, 397) = 0.95$; $p = .002$, Cohen's $d < 0.1$ in both cases. Correlations for study variables are displayed in Table 1. To examine whether cooperation scores varied with leaders' gender and whether this effect applied both to female and male leaders, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The variables were centered on their means to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). The effects of leader sex and participant sex were entered at Step 1. The effects of leader gender were entered at Step 2, and their interactions at Step 3 (see Table 2). A significant change

in R^2 for Step 2 indicated that leader gender predicted scores in cooperation and accounted for more variance than leader sex and participant sex, R^2 Change = .52; F change = 213.03, p = .001. In particular, communion was a positive predictor of cooperation within the team (β = .66). The β value in the case of agency was notably smaller (β = .10). These results were not qualified by interactions. To be cautious about generalizing findings to both male and female leaders, we calculated simple slopes for each group separately, computing the relationship between communion and cooperation. This analysis revealed that, both for female and male leaders, higher communion was related to higher levels of cooperation among participants: β = .73; $t(198)$ = 14.91; p = .001 for female leaders and β = .66; $t(198)$ = 12.46; p = .001 for male leaders.

Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 relied on different research designs and samples and supported our hypothesis that stereotypically feminine (i.e., communal) male leaders stimulate more cooperation than stereotypically masculine (i.e., agentic) male leaders. This finding held for female leaders too. In Study 3, we turned our attention back to male leaders and examined more complex moderating and mediating relationships. First, we examined whether the positive influence of communal male leaders on cooperation is stronger in male-dominated contexts and, second, whether this moderated relationship is mediated by followers' identification with communal traits.

The Moderating Effect of Group Sex Composition

Environmental factors such as the proportion of men in a group or their status can influence the extent to which gender traits and behaviors prevail. For instance, Nowell and Tinkler (1994) found that all-male groups tend to contribute significantly less to common interests than all-female groups. Thus, a male-dominated context may hinder communal traits and behaviors associated with cooperation, where male-dominated can be simply understood as a group or organization that is in majority male (Kray & Thompson, 2005). The prevalence of stereotypically masculine behaviors in male-dominated contexts obtains through a two-way influence process. Not only are relevant referents in most organizations predominantly male, which may make them less prone to display communal traits that may subsequently not be emulated by their followers, the implicit expectations conveyed by a predominantly male context may also avoid acceptance of such stereotypically feminine displays from leaders and their followers (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Put differently, the

prevalence of stereotypically masculine traits and behaviors is linked to the stereotypically masculine definition of (male) leadership in male-dominated contexts (Eagly, 1987; Koenig et al., 2011). As such, communal male leaders might be particularly important in engendering cooperative behavior in contexts with a high proportion of men. Note here that in-group membership and similarity also influence the effects that relevant referents produce (Blanton, Crocker, & Miller, 2000), and men are thus more likely than women to be influenced by male referents. We therefore predict that communal male leaders have a stronger effect on cooperation the more group sex composition is slanted toward men.

Hypothesis 2: Group sex composition moderates the effect of the type of leadership on cooperation such that the positive effect of a communal male leader (vs. an agentic male leader) is stronger with a higher proportion of men.

Male Leadership Referents and Levels of Communion

Cooperation may also be positively related to team members' identification with communal traits, which might create the sense of community and emotional well-being that is required in a cooperative environment among followers. Whereas sex is one of the most influential variables in people's identification with communal and agentic traits (Bem, 1974; Spence & Buckner, 2000), both men and women can incorporate counter-stereotypical elements in their identity and behavior depending on the significance of the environment (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). As explained earlier, men and women in organizations and particularly in leadership positions tend to be more communal and less agentic than in other contexts (see Cuadrado, 2004, for Spanish data). Contrary to the idea that gender traits are stable or dispositional, there is also evidence that changes induced by the context can influence activation of different gender traits at any particular moment (Leszczynski & Strough, 2008).

Male leaders may be especially influential in the gendered definition of identity of their followers. As Lord and Brown (2004) proposed, leaders can influence subordinates by shifting the salience of different aspects of their self-concept or by creating new aspects of their identity. The working self-concept, which is defined as the contextually sensitive portion of the self-concept that guides action on a moment-to-moment basis (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999), is in line with this idea and implies that certain dimensions of identity can be activated at a given time as a function of referents (Turner & Oakes, 1997), even when the leadership referent is not part of the own

group or organization (e.g., Mohandas Gandhi, Marian Wright, Meg Whitman, or Nelson Mandela). From a gender perspective, this implies that given that leadership is associated with men and with the stereotypical form of masculinity, followers would suppress communal traits. Conversely, as our mental associations about leadership follow from our observation of these groups, they can change and, when groups are viewed in new roles, people's spontaneous mental associations and gender stereotypes are reduced, even after relatively brief exposure (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). Because our focus is on the positive changes that the "feminine" side of male leadership might bring about, we look at followers' activation of communion and propose that a communal male leader may influence team members by increasing the salience of the communal aspects of their identity—those aspects associated with cooperation.

Hypothesis 3: Communal male leaders engender a stronger identification with communal traits than agentic male leaders.

Sex composition of the group also plays a role in this respect. In contexts with a higher proportion of men, the adoption of stereotypically feminine characteristics becomes less likely (Gerber, 2009; Kray & Thompson, 2005). Moreover, distinctiveness theory postulates that a majority status can increase the extent to which membership in the majority group is central to one's self-concept (Cota & Dion, 1986). Thus, we may expect that the more a group is male-dominated (i.e., the higher the proportion of men), the less communal identity traits will be prevalent and the bigger the changes in such identity attributes a communal male leader may bring about.

Hypothesis 4: Group sex composition moderates the effect of the type of leadership on communion activation such that the positive effect of a communal male leader (vs. an agentic male leader) is stronger for groups with a higher proportion of men.

The Mediating Role of Followers' Communion

We have proposed that communal male leaders engender more cooperation than agentic male leaders as well as render followers' communal identity traits salient. Implicit in this analysis was the suggestion that masculine referents' influence on identification with communion is the mechanism through which their effects on cooperation come about—Communal identity traits mediate the influence of leader gender on intergroup cooperation. As noted earlier, identification with communal traits mediates the effect of sex in

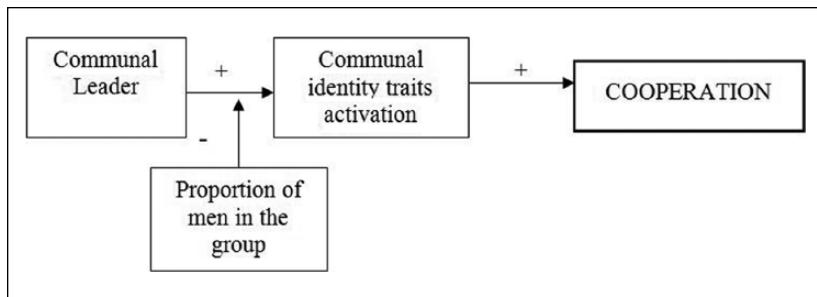


Figure 1. Research model (Study 3).

different individual and group processes (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Moreover, followers' identity traits are consequential for a variety of individual perceptions and behaviors and can be activated by the influence of leadership references (Lord & Brown, 2004; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). By influencing the way that followers view themselves and shifting their self-conceptions, leaders exert powerful and enduring effects on work behaviors and generate outcomes for their organizations and work groups (Lord & Brown, 2004). While such outcomes may include encouraging the display of cooperative behaviors, its development may depend on the acquisition of communal traits. Hence, if male leaders can influence subordinates' behaviors by shifting the salience of different aspects of their gendered self-concept and promote identification with more communal traits, they may endorse important outcomes such as promoting cooperation. We have argued that having a communal male leader as a reference is a way to bring about such a gender identity change (contingent on group sex composition), and we propose that this effect on communal traits mediates the influence of the type of leader that is taken as a reference on cooperation (see Figure 1, for a summary display of the research model presented in Study 3).

Hypothesis 5: The interactive effect of the type of male leadership and group sex composition on cooperation is mediated by group members' communal identity.

Method

To test our Hypotheses 2 to 5 and to replicate Hypothesis 1 using a design that would involve workers and managers rather than students (i.e., in contrast to Study 1) and would allow testing for causality (i.e., in contrast to Study 2),

we used an experimental design manipulating the description of a male leader presented as a referent for behavior and measured its combined effects with sex composition of the group in predicting a behavioral measure of cooperation. This setting deviates in a positive way from lab experiments with students in that participants attended the experimental sessions in their own workplace as part of their sustained training. Given that controlled experiments bring about tremendous benefit to establish causality and a small percentage of the literature has tested the factors associated with effective leadership using controlled interventions, especially in work settings (Avolio et al., 2009; Yukl, 2012), this type of design could be of great relevance for leadership studies.

Note that to serve as a reference for behavior, the leader needs not be one's (direct) leader. For instance, the President of the United States may be a referent for many even if they never have any direct experience with him, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta may be a referent for leadership for many people inside and outside of India. The concept of leadership referent thus includes one's direct leader, but is by no means limited to it. Through this referent function, the gender traits displayed by the leader may strongly influence people's attitudes and behavior, shaping follower actions in similarly gendered ways.

In line with studies showing the masculine nature of leadership as a common reference (Koenig et al., 2011), our analysis implies that an agentic male referent is the norm and a communal male reflects a deviation. To establish whether this was indeed the case, we included a control condition with no leadership referent, whereby the agentic and control conditions should yield similar results, whereas the communal condition would deviate positively in cooperation as well as in identification with communal traits.

To measure cooperation in Study 3, we used one of the best-known approaches: the Prisoner's Dilemma game (Axelrod, 1984). This experimental set-up makes it possible to examine how features of a social setting influence a behavioral measure of cooperation (Kerr, 1995). The set-up is one in which the collective interest is best served if all individuals—or groups—cooperate (Komorita & Parks, 1995). Indeed, the dilemma lies in the fact that it is more desirable to maximize selfish interests but, if all groups do so, all receive poorer outcomes. Cooperation as measured in the Prisoner's Dilemma can thus be interpreted as closely aligned with team performance, especially when it is played over multiple rounds and repeated mutual cooperation yields higher pay-offs (Axelrod, 1984).

We should also note here that whereas engendering cooperation within groups is an important challenge for leadership, the greater and arguably more important challenge lies in stimulating cooperation between groups

(Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012). Indeed, intergroup cooperation is vital to organizational functioning (Brett & Rognes, 1986; van Knippenberg, 2003), and the pull away from cooperation toward self-interested behavior is stronger in cooperation between groups than in cooperation within groups (Kramer, 1991). Furthermore, men are particularly competitive in intergroup interactions compared with individual interactions (van Vugt, De Cremer, & Janssen, 2007). Accordingly, Study 3 includes a group-level analysis of cooperation and focuses on intergroup cooperation. Following Kramer's (1991) social dilemma analysis, the Prisoner's Dilemma set-up is particularly suited for the present focus on intergroup cooperation (cf. van Knippenberg, 2003).

Participants and Design

Participants were 279 employees and managers, divided in 88 work groups from 20 business organizations in Spain (10 from the industrial sector and 10 from the service sector). Mean proportion of men per group was 65% ($SD = .30$). In all, 72.6% of the groups were male-dominated (i.e., formed by 2 or more men). On average, 37% of group members were managers. Mean age was 38, with an average tenure in their present position of 9 years. Four groups participated in each session, and sessions were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions (agentic vs. communal vs. control). Another predictor variable was the sex composition of groups—the proportion of men.

Manipulation of Leader Gender

The experimental manipulation consisted of a 9-min video about a television program based around an interview with a male business leader who represented a referent in successful management (in reality, a professional actor enacting the experimental scripts). For the *agentic condition*, the leader was described both by himself and by coworkers and subordinates in terms of agentic traits—He was presented, among others, as ambitious, independent, competitive, and dominant (Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). In the *communal condition*, in contrast, the leader was described with communal descriptors—capable of listening, kind, approachable, and attentive to the needs of others.

The video was made using professional actors and actresses and was produced by a company specialized in TV production. The elements of the video unrelated to leaders' gender (dialogues, scenario, actors, duration, information on previous effectiveness and career, etc.) were kept constant across the videos. Thus, exactly the same information was provided and the social desirability of the two referents was maintained constant in terms of organizational management competences and achievements. To control the effects of video

exposure, participants in the control group watched a video that was similar in length and scenario but was neutral in relation to the object of study and included no leader. The video in this control condition concerned dreams and creativity, and included neutral information and images about the brain, art, and history. Participants were told that the video would help them to better understand some physiological substrates of creativity. For manipulation checks, a pilot study was conducted in which 190 participants were exposed to the experimental conditions (Gartzia, 2010). In this study, the communal leader was perceived as being more communal and less agentic than the agentic leader, establishing the effectiveness of our manipulation.

Procedure

Participants arrived for a three-session training as part of a research program to assess organizational needs and subsequently develop intervention plans. Participants knew that they would fill out some questionnaires and that the collected data were confidential. During the first session, participants responded to measures of communion and other psychological and sociodemographic data and then carried out a set of group dynamics neutral to the object of study (e.g., problem-solving exercises that required finding ways of dealing with work-related problems). These activities were aimed at making their participation more attractive and ensuring their retention for the second session, which was carried out roughly 1 month later and consisted on watching the video with the manipulation of the leader. After watching the video, participants were asked to fill out the first questionnaire, which included again the measure of communion. Thereupon, they were randomly assigned to four groups and started the Prisoner's Dilemma activity. In the current set-up, players had to choose between two options, X (noncooperation) and Y (cooperation), under the instruction of "*win as much money as possible.*" In each session, a Prisoner's Dilemma was played out between four groups. Each group had 3 to 4 players who had to make the decision as a group. The game was played only once, but it required choosing between the cooperative and defective options for nine consecutive rounds. All participants in a session belonged to the same company. In the third session, participants were given individual reports containing the most relevant results of the assessment carried out, and were offered a fuller explanation of the research program.

Measures

Cooperative behavior. Cooperation was operationalized as the total number of cooperative decisions made by a group across the nine rounds of the

Prisoner's Dilemma game. The cooperation score for each group could thus range from 0 to 9.

Communion. As in Study 1, we used the BSRI (Bem, 1974) and the PAQ (Spence & Helmreich, 1978), with a 6-point Likert-type scale. Because both instruments had a similar structure and previous studies have shown their internal coherence and construct validity (Lenney, 1991), we carried out a principal components analysis with Varimax rotation using all the communion items included in both questionnaires. Taking a value of .35 as the cutoff point, all 17 items loaded on the corresponding dimension. This dimension explained 55% of the variance and showed an appropriate Cronbach's alpha (.87).

Control variables. Because prior research has found that organization type (industrial vs. service providing) is associated with gender stereotypes (Nayak, 2006), organization type was included as a control variable. Moreover, because sex composition may be correlated with group size when groups are small (Bedeian & Mossholder, 2000), group size was included as a control variable. Finally, given that several participants were supervisors or managers, we also controlled for the proportion of managers in the group in all the analyses. We also included pretest communion to control for potential pretest differences between groups.

Results

Because groups were nested in different sessions to perform the Prisoner's Dilemma, the use of multilevel analysis was most appropriate. We estimated a series of multilevel regression models (Snijders & Bosker, 1999) using the xtmixed option in STATA 9.0 (StataCorp). This procedure fits linear mixed models with fixed effects (γ_0) analogous to regression coefficients on nested data. We estimated a two-level model with groups nested within sessions, using maximum restricted likelihood. We then calculated the proportional reduction of prediction error at Level 1 when predictors were added to the null model, which is analogous to R^2 in multiple regression analysis. To avoid destabilizing effects due to multicollinearity and following Snijders and Bosker's (1999) suggestions about centering, independent variables were centered on their grand means, except leadership referent, which was represented by two dummy variables capturing the three conditions. Table 3 presents means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that communal male leaders would engender higher levels of cooperation than agentic male leaders. The manipulation of

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Nonexperimental Study Variables (Study 3).

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Organization type	1.49	0.50	1					
2. Group size	3.02	0.97	.02	1				
3. Proportion of managers	0.37	0.32	.09	-.22*	1			
4. Communion pretest	4.55	0.36	-.07	.01	.02	1		
5. Proportion of men	0.65	0.30	-.06	-.09	-.05	-.31**	1	
6. Communion	4.43	0.47	.08	.01	.02	.53**	-.43**	1
7. Cooperative behaviors	4.22	2.97	.05	.03	-.01	.36**	-.16	.59**

Note. Given that the dummies created to test the effects of the experimental conditions do not have the same meaning in correlation and regression analysis, they are not included here ($n = 88$ groups).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

leader gender was represented by two dummies, Dummy 1 representing the communal/agentic comparison and Dummy 2 representing the communal/control comparison. After the estimation of the null model (Model 0), we entered control variables and compared the fit of the regression model to an empty (intercept-only) model in Model 1. In Model 2, we entered leader gender and proportion of men. Results showed that groups exposed to the communal male leader display more cooperative behavior than groups exposed to the agentic male leader, $B = -4.12$, $SE = .62$, $p < .01$, Cohen's $d = 1.79$, and groups in the control condition, $B = -3.10$, $SE = .65$, $p < .01$, Cohen's $d = 1.32$. Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the effect of leadership referents on cooperation is moderated by sex composition of the group. To test this, a product term for each leader gender dummy with sex composition was entered in the hierarchical multiple regression (Model 3 in Table 4). This yielded the predicted interaction between the proportion of men and leadership referents for Dummy 2 (communal vs. control) on cooperation, $B = -7.89$, $SE = 2.19$, $p < .01$, but not for Dummy 1 (communal vs. agentic). To further analyze these interaction patterns (i.e., the nonsignificant interaction is included for completeness of presentation as it concerns the same experimental factor), we conducted simple slopes analysis (Aiken & West, 1991)—see Figure 2 for a graphic display.

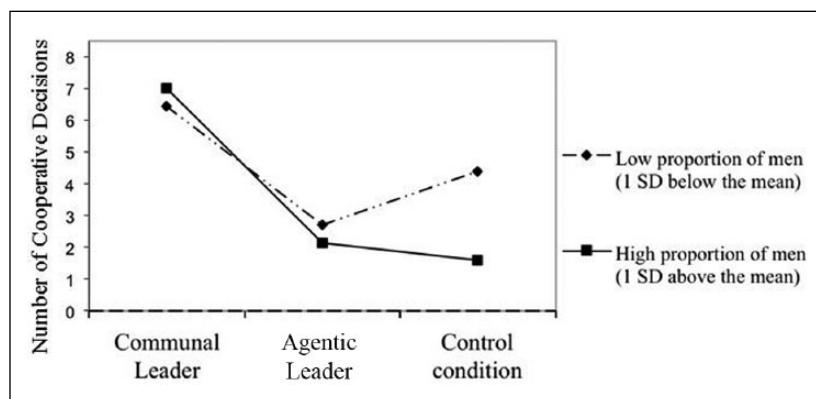
As predicted, groups with a high proportion of men (1 *SD* above the mean) cooperated more when the leader was communal than agentic, $B = -3.84$, $SE = 1.95$, $p < .05$, and more than in the control condition, $B = -5.33$, $SE = 2.69$, $p < .05$, (Cohen's $d > 2$ in both cases). In line with our hypothesis, for groups with a

Table 4. Multilevel Analysis of the Effects of Communion and Sex Composition of the Groups on Cooperation (Study 3).

Parameters	Cooperative behaviors			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Grand mean (B0j)	2.93* (1.49)	6.88** (1.30)	6.99** (1.27)	6.52** (1.21)
Organization type	0.95 (0.73)	-0.31 (0.51)	-0.36 (0.52)	-0.37 (0.48)
Group size	0.06 (0.30)	0.12 (0.27)	0.12 (0.25)	0.12 (0.24)
Number of managers	-0.42 (0.89)	-0.11 (0.81)	-0.59 (0.76)	-0.39 (0.72)
Pretest communion	2.41** (0.77)	1.77* (0.73)	1.41* (0.69)	0.28 (0.74)
Proportion of men		-1.54 (0.85)	1.67 (1.47)	1.38 (1.38)
EC Dummy1 (communal/agentic)		-4.12** (0.62)	-4.01** (0.62)	-3.23** (0.63)
EC Dummy2 (communal/control)		-3.10** (0.65)	-3.17** (0.65)	-2.71** (0.63)
EC Dummy1 × Men			-3.35† (1.78)	-1.14 (1.81)
EC Dummy2 × Men			-7.89** (2.19)	-6.52** (2.11)
Communion				2.10** (0.66)
R ²	.12	.46	.52	.58

Note. $n = 88$ groups; R^2 = proportion of variance explained by each model, computed as the proportional reduction in the Level 1 variance when predictors were added to the null model. The values in the upper half of the table are standardized regression coefficients (0 = industrial, 1 = services). EC Dummy 1 = Experimental condition Dummy 1 (communal vs. agentic). EC Dummy 2 = Experimental condition Dummy 2 (communal vs. control).

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

**Figure 2.** Intergroup cooperation by experimental condition and proportion of men (Study 3).

low proportion of men (1 SD below the mean), no differences were found between the communal and control conditions, $B = -1.67$, $SE = 1.35$, ns . Contrary

Table 5. Multilevel Analysis of the Effects on Communion of Sex Composition of the Group and Type of Leadership Referent Presented as a Reference (Study 3).

Parameters	Communion					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Grand mean (B_{0j})	4.29**	(.21)	4.65**	(.20)	4.65**	(.20)
Organization type	0.10	(.09)	0.00	(.08)	-0.02	(.08)
Pretest communion	0.73**	(.11)	0.47**	(.11)	0.49**	(.10)
Group size	-0.00	(.04)	-0.00	(.04)	-0.00	(.37)
Number of managers	0.01	(.13)	-0.01	(.12)	-0.04	(.11)
Proportion of men			-0.57**	(.13)	-0.06	(.22)
EC Dummy1 (communal/agentic)			-0.39**	(.09)	-0.35**	(.09)
EC Dummy2 (communal/control)			-0.23*	(.10)	-0.22*	(.10)
EC Dummy1 × Men					-1.0**	(.27)
EC Dummy2 × Men					-0.57†	(.33)
R^2	.28		.49		.55	

Note. $n = 88$ groups; R^2 = proportion of variance explained by each model, computed as the proportional reduction in the Level 1 variance when predictors were added to the null model. The values in the upper half of the table are standardized regression coefficients (0 = industrial, 1 = services). EC Dummy 1 = Experimental condition Dummy 1 (communal vs. agentic). EC Dummy 2 = Experimental condition Dummy 2 (communal vs. control).

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

to predictions, however, for groups with a low proportion of men, the difference between the communal and agentic conditions, $B = -5.96$, $SE = 1.17$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $d = 2.19$, was as strong as for groups with a higher proportion of men. While these findings further testify to the importance of communal leadership in engendering cooperation, they also suggest that the predicted influence of group sex composition only emerged in the absence of an explicit leadership referent (i.e., in the control condition). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that leadership referents would affect levels of communion in the group. To test this hypothesis, we estimated hierarchical regression models. After the estimation of the null model (Model 0), we entered control variables and compared the fit of the regression model to an empty (intercept-only) model in Model 1. In Model 2, we entered leadership referents and the proportion of men (see Table 5). Results showed that groups exposed to a communal leader presented higher levels of communion than groups exposed to an agentic leader, $B = -.39$, $SE = .09$, $p < .01$, Cohen's $d = .92$, and groups in the control condition, $B = -.23$, $SE = .10$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $d = .76$. Hypothesis 3 is supported.

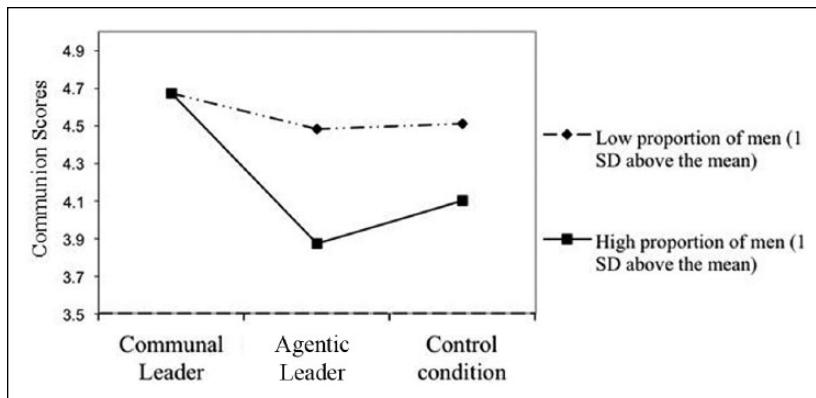


Figure 3. Levels of communion in the group by experimental condition and proportion of men (Study 3).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the effect of leader gender on followers' communion would be moderated by sex composition of the group. To test this, the interaction effects of sex composition and leader gender dummies were entered in the hierarchical multiple regression model (Model 3 in Table 5). There was an interaction of the proportion of men and Dummy 1 (communal vs. agentic) on communal identity, $B = -1.0$, $SE = .27$, $p < .01$. In the comparison between the communal and control conditions, differences were not statistically significant. To further analyze the interaction, we again conducted simple slopes analyses and for complete coverage also included slopes for the nonsignificant interaction (see Figure 3).

As predicted, groups with a high proportion of men scored higher in communion when the leader was communal than when he was agentic, $B = -.97$, $SE = .32$, $p < .01$, Cohen's $d = 1.78$. A similar but nonsignificant pattern was found contrasting the communal and control conditions, $B = -.84$, $SE = .44$, $p < .10$. In contrast, when the proportion of men was relatively low, no differences were found between the communal and agentic conditions, $B = -.01$, $SE = .22$, *ns*, nor between the communal and control conditions, $B = -.08$, $SE = .19$, *ns*. While this pattern of results is largely as predicted in Hypothesis 4, the fact that the communal leader did not yield significantly higher communion than the control condition when the proportion of men was high implies less than full support for predictions.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that followers' communion mediates the interaction between sex composition of the group and leader gender on cooperation. Following Krull and MacKinnon (2001), we tested a cross-level mediation

model that corrected bias and used bootstrapped indirect effects to predict mediation of communion in the two dummies that represented our experimental manipulation. We first used random group resampling (RGR) and intraclass correlations 1 and 2 (ICC1 and ICC2) coefficients to examine whether aggregation of communion was appropriate. The RGR coefficient (Bliese & Halverson, 2002) randomly creates groups from the original distribution (i.e., 1,000 drawings) and examines the variance of these randomly drawn groups. The obtained RGR z -value was $-.34$, indicating that the observed variance within groups is not smaller than what would be expected in the randomly created groups. Moreover, the ICC cutoff value was $.14$ for ICC1 and $.37$ for ICC2, thereby confirming that aggregation was not justified. We therefore tested a cross-level mediation model that predicts that a lower-level variable (i.e., communion) mediates the relationship between leader gender and intergroup cooperation. Bootstrap results showed that an indirect effect indeed predicted mediation of communion in Dummy 1 (communal vs. agentic), where the true indirect effect was estimated to lie between -4.663 and -3.261 with 95% confidence, and Dummy 2 (communal vs. control), where the true indirect effect was estimated to lie between -43.261 and $-.153$ with 95% confidence, $ps < .05$. Hypothesis 5 is therefore supported.

Discussion

Three studies conducted in different contexts and countries and using different research set-ups and operationalizations provide experimental and field evidence that communion is consequential for (male) leadership effectiveness in terms of promoting intergroup cooperation. Results showed that communal, stereotypically feminine male leaders stimulate more cooperation than agentic, stereotypically masculine male leaders, and that this effect also applies to female leaders. These findings are important because they speak to the gendered nature of male leadership and the difference between sex and gender in ways that are not only relevant to leadership effectiveness but also to a broader understanding of gender in organizational behavior. Indeed, whereas most leaders in organizations are men, their gendered nature and the benefits of incorporating stereotypically feminine, communal traits generally go unnoticed.

In an effort to extend these relationships, results from Study 3 suggest that the positive effect that stereotypically feminine male leaders exert on cooperation is produced through its effect on followers' activation of stereotypically feminine identity traits, and somewhat more tentative evidence that this effect holds stronger in contexts that are male-dominated. These findings therefore also add to our understanding of cooperation by articulating the role

of salient gendered traits. Given that a change is needed in leadership toward a model that promotes shared goals, teamwork, and cooperation (Avolio et al., 2009; Yukl, 2012), the results reported here are all the more interesting in demonstrating the negative influence of stereotypically masculine male leadership for contemporary organizations.

Theoretical Implications

Extending conceptual analyses that point to the need to place helpful, considerate, communicative, and empathic female leaders in leadership positions (Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger, & Baumgarten, 2007; Kark, 2004), our study demonstrates the specific importance of stereotypically feminine, communal traits for male leaders too. Furthermore, our studies suggest that although communion is at the core a trait that is part of the gender self-concept (Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), leader's communion can also have state and behavioral expressions through observable displays that affect leadership effects—what leaders say and do convey their stereotypically feminine orientation and has a major effect on followers' willingness to cooperate. This invites several conclusions that provide important counterpoints to the *Think Manager–Think Male* perspective.

First, extending earlier observations that there is no evidence for the superiority of male leadership (Eagly et al., 1995; Frink, Robinson, Reithel, Arthur, & Ammeter, 2003), the present findings show that for cooperation, arguably a key indicator of leadership effectiveness (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002), a leader who incorporates communal traits is more effective than an agentic leader. Because communion and agency constitute gendered dimensions of the self and are therefore influenced by gender roles and prescriptions to a greater extent than other psychological dimensions (Bem, 1974; Leszczynski & Strough, 2008; Spence & Buckner, 2000), looking at leadership effects from this viewpoint offers a value-added framing that is conceptually distinct from conceptualizations of leadership such as transformational, people-oriented, or democratic. Whereas it is true that such leadership framings include a wide range of relational attributes that are highly feminized, their gendered nature has more often been questioned and therefore placing the analysis in more specific gender traits and behaviors as measured in the gender literature (i.e., communion and agency) better captures the extent to which *gender* issues should matter to leadership researchers.

Second, by focusing on gender rather than sex, we contribute to social role theories of leadership (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2007) in that we examine within-sex variability and gendered dimensions *within* male leadership, rather than

between men and women. Thus, we show that it is the gendered construction of male leadership that is the issue rather than (only) leader sex. In relation to this, it is important to note the general absence of sex differences in our variables. In relation to communion, differences favoring women only emerged among subordinates (Study 3, control condition), and not among actual managers (Study 2). This is consistent with previous studies showing that women in leadership positions, to a greater extent than women in subordinates' roles, endorse "masculine" traits as a way to adapt to leadership functions (see Eagly & Johnson, 1990) and therefore reinforces the idea that gender has an even stronger effect than sex on leadership outcomes at the workplace.

Third, our results are important in extending the self and identity perspective in leadership (Lord & Brown, 2004; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), which emphasizes that leaders' influence on follower self-definition is an important mechanism to affect follower behavior—follower identity mediates the effects of leadership. Research within this framework has put a strong emphasis on primarily collective identification and to a lesser degree self-evaluation (van Knippenberg, 2012) and has disregarded the role of gender. As the present findings demonstrate, however, there is a clear role for gender identity traits as a mediating mechanism in leadership: contingent on group sex composition, communal male leaders engender more intergroup cooperation by rendering the stereotypically feminine aspects of identity salient (i.e., communion). These findings hold a clear invitation to engage more with gendered dimensions of identity as an exploratory mechanism in leadership.

Fourth, our study also extends research in the sex composition of groups. It has often been theorized that group sex composition may determine group processes and outcomes such as cooperation (Kray & Thompson, 2005). Our findings that communal male leaders may change both the communion and cooperation of male-dominated groups imply an important nuance in this conclusion and suggest the issue here too may be gender as much as sex. There are some interesting and potentially important parallels here with observations that organizational contexts are moderating influences that partially determine whether sex diversity is likely to be associated with positive or negative consequences (Jackson & Joshi, 2004). Therefore, in accordance with other authors (Joshi & Roh, 2009; Stewart & McDermott, 2004), our results suggest the relevance of including not only surface-level attributes (i.e., sex) but also those that are less visible (i.e., gender traits of identity) in analyzing moderating influences on the effects of sex composition on group performance.

Finally, we should note that effectiveness should not only be equated to cooperation. Indeed, the greater ability of communal male leaders to promote cooperation in the present study does not imply that our understanding of

leadership should change to a *Think Manager–Think Feminine* perspective and that stereotypically masculine qualities such as assertiveness, decision, courage, or self-confidence have no relevance for effective leadership. Cooperation is a key outcome of leadership, but it is not the only outcome of importance, and we readily acknowledge the possibility that for other outcomes (e.g., more oriented on individual competitive achievement), communal traits may not be so clearly associated with greater leadership effectiveness (Powell & Butterfield, 1979).

Practical Implications

The social dilemma nature of many organizational practices (Kramer, 1991) makes promoting cooperation a major challenge for leaders. In relation to this, our findings demonstrate that stereotypically feminine traits are conducive to cooperation and that this effect is independent of leader sex—not only communal female leaders but also communal male leaders promote more cooperation than agentic leaders among male and female participants. These relationships should be considered when designing human resource practices such as leadership assessment and development and be part of male leaders' development activities and programs. For example, organizations may want to measure these communal dimensions in assessment tools such as 360 degree feedback surveys, such that stereotypically feminine traits are explicitly part of (male) leaders' annual performance review.

Results from Study 3 also suggest that in a situation with no explicit leadership referent and with a stereotypically masculine male leader, a higher proportion of men in the group have negative effects on cooperation. This is in accordance with studies showing that male-dominated contexts hinder stereotypically feminine traits and behaviors (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Gerber, 2009) and suggests that the contextual effect of sex composition also influences cooperation. A clear implication for practice would thus be the need to promote interventions aimed at disrupting traditional masculine identity-construction processes in male-dominated environments, as, for instance, illustrated by Ely and Meyerson's (2010) study of male workers in offshore oil platforms who changed their masculine identity after general safety training. Given that leaders fulfill important referent functions and most leaders are men, redefining prototypes about male management in a way that they incorporate more stereotypically feminine characteristics might be particularly useful.

One possible effect of placing communal male leaders in management positions is to increase their advantage over female candidates by promoting the development of relevant leadership traits that they currently lack. If the

problem of women's access to leadership positions is considered *only* from a sex perspective, this could undoubtedly be the case—more prepared men might lead to more pronounced discrimination for women. However, the agentic definition of leadership and the low value given to femininity-linked characteristics in male-dominated contexts constitute one of the biggest obstacles for gender equality at the workplace (Gerber, 2009; Koenig et al., 2011). Thus, to the extent that leadership connotes agency, it can feel right to choose a man as a leader, thus providing men with a straight road to authority and pulling women back (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Our findings may thus be of great relevance to reduce the current *glass ceiling* by placing emphasis on the role of stereotypically feminine dimensions as important resources for organizations, also for men.

Limitations and Future Directions

A strength of the present study is the experimental nature of Studies 1 and 3 that made it possible to draw conclusions about causality and to base conclusions on an objective behavioral measure of cooperation. Results showed that the ability of communal as opposed to agentic male leaders to stimulate cooperation is not limited to one particular experimental set-up or experimental design. Furthermore, our results were not limited to a particular operationalization of leadership or cooperation and, not limited to one cultural context (see Gartzia & López-Zafra, 2014, for a discussion about specificities of gender research in Spain). A study's strengths are often obtained at the expense of some weaknesses, however, and the present study is no exception in that respect.

First, even though the measure of cooperation in Study 3 is probably the best-established cooperation measure in the behavioral sciences and results derived from the measure are an accepted part of leadership and organizational behavior research (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002; Kramer, 1991), without further replication of the current findings with instances of cooperation in day-to-day organizational life, we cannot be sure that the current findings generalize to such contexts. In Study 2, we measured subordinates' likelihood to cooperate with actual leaders and coworkers, but future research incorporating on-the-job measures of cooperation to replicate the current results would be valuable. Because cooperation is a complex phenomenon influenced by many variables (e.g., team cohesion, organizational culture, or shared mental models), some of these relevant control variables should also be included in future research (an issue of lower concern here given that findings are consistent over studies, and controls are not an issue for experimental research with random assignment to conditions).

Study 3 was also conducted in the context of a training program, which may have confounded the observed effects, and presented the leadership referents in a way that clearly emphasized their success and achievements. While in many ways this would define a leadership referent, it leaves open the question whether male leaders behaving in a communal way with no explicitly recognized reputation would have the same effects as our celebrated leadership referents. As studies analyzing the backlash phenomenon have shown, not only women but also men who violate gender stereotypes receive social and economic penalties (Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010). Thus, male leaders who behave in a communal way in regular organizational contexts may be perceived as less competent and thus lack power to influence followers. The results of Study 1 in which no reputation information was included and Study 2 in which leaders in the sample can be expected to reflect roughly “average” reputation in the population would suggest, however, that the Study 3 findings are not limited to cases in which leaders have an excellent reputation. Studies 1 and 2 did not include measures of perceived leader reputation, however; so conclusions regarding the role of leader reputation in these gender effects await future investigation.

Conclusion

Although the gendered nature of leadership has been studied for decades, we do not seem to have a good understanding of how (male) leadership relates to organizational functioning. Meeting this challenge is especially necessary as leadership roles are defined in masculine terms and most managers are men. Furthermore, male leaders often face the challenge of dealing with stereotypically feminine tasks such as promoting cooperation. Our study directly addresses this challenge by empirically demonstrating the influence of gendered models of male leadership on followers’ activation of stereotypically feminine traits that are relevant in serving collective interests and cooperation. In doing so, this study challenges scholars and practitioners in management to consider the gendered dimensions of male leadership in a way that goes beyond what sex alone might explain.

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