

**Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB) and Work-Family Conflict:  
The Role of Stereotype Content, Supervisor Gender, and Gender Role Beliefs**

**Andrew Yu**

*University of Melbourne*

**Shaun Pichler**

*California State University, Fullerton*

**Marcello Russo**

*University of Bologna*

**Leslie Hammer**

*Portland State University*

**Abstract**

Existing research consistently shows that informal workplace support, such as family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB), are more effective at reducing work-family conflict than formal organizational supports. The purpose of the current study is to integrate propositions from the stereotype content model and social role theory to understand how family-supportive supervision is related to social evaluations of supervisors (i.e., perceptions of supervisor warmth and competence) and identify boundary conditions (i.e., supervisor gender and employee role beliefs) to help researchers and practitioners understand how these relationships affect work-family conflict. We test our hypotheses using two studies, one an experimental vignette study and the other a two-wave survey study of working individuals with family or caregiving responsibilities. Our results suggest that FSSB are importantly related to how employees socially evaluate their supervisors along the dimensions of warmth and competence; supervisor gender moderates the relationship between FSSB and perceived competence (but not warmth); employee gender role beliefs moderates both these relationship (but in a counterintuitive way for supervisor competence); and we find evidence that warmth and competence mediate the effects that FSSB has on work-family conflict. Implications for theory, future research, and practice are discussed.

*Keywords:* family supportive supervision; family supportive supervisor behaviors; FSSB; gender; gender role beliefs; social evaluations; stereotyping; stereotype content model; warmth; competence; work interference with family; work-family conflict; WFC

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## Introduction

Individuals in the industrialized world are working more intensely, for longer hours, and are asked to balance competing demands that arise from the multiple roles across both work and non-work domains (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Wayne et al., 2017). The number of dual-earner households, single-parent families, and adults who have caregiving responsibilities (e.g., elderly relatives, childcare, or both) have drastically increased over the past several decades (Kelly et al., 2008). This has contributed to an increased prevalence in psychological strain that has arisen from juggling work and family roles (Major et al., 2002). The recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought even further spotlight to the significant demands associated with work and non-work and associated decrements in psychological well-being (e.g., Shockley et al., 2021). Therefore, scholars and practitioners have focused their efforts on understanding how employees, supervisors, organizations, and policymakers can reduce the strain associated with balancing work and non-work roles (Clark et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2011).

When it comes to reducing the psychological strain that arises from juggling work and non-work roles, the vocational behavior literature suggests that informal sources of support (e.g., support from coworkers and supervisors) are far more effective than formal support from the organization (e.g., work-life balance programs; Allen, 2001; Muse & Pichler, 2011). For example, Kossek et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on workplace social support and their results clearly demonstrated that direct support from an employee's supervisor (e.g., family-supportive behaviors) can be more effective than general forms of social support in reducing work-family conflict. In addition to reducing the negative effects of psychological strain, family-specific support also has an enhancing effect on positive outcomes for employees. These include employee well-being (Hammer et al., 2011; Lapierre & Allen, 2006), work engagement (Rofcanin et al., 2021), creativity (McKersie et al., 2019), thriving at work (Russo et al., 2018), and physiological outcomes such as sleep quality (Crain et al., 2014).

Despite the number of studies that have documented the beneficial effects of family-supportive supervision for employees, the extant literature lacks an understanding of the mechanisms and boundary conditions that explain how, when, and why FSSB can alleviate employee psychological strain (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Hopkins, 2005). This is the next vital step in advancing the theoretical development of the family-supportive supervision literature with existing and future research. That is, simply concluding that family-supportive supervision reduces work-family conflict makes the implicit assumption that FSSB are universally effective and that all employees will interpret and react to FSSB in the same manner. However, studies have challenged this assumption both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, researchers have argued that employees may value family supportive supervision in different ways (e.g., Bagger & Li, 2014; Russo et al., 2018). Empirically, published studies have documented a high degree of variability in effect sizes for the relationship between FSSB and work-family conflict (e.g.,  $r = -.15$ , Odle-Dusseau, et al., 2012;  $r = -.38$ , Crain, et al., 2014). To this point, Crain and Stevens (2018) urged researchers in their review of the literature to develop and test additional models that explore the processes through which family-supportive supervision can reduce negative employee outcomes.

For the purposes of our research, we build upon the stereotype content model (SCM) and social role theory (SRT) to understand the relationship between family-supportive supervision and work-family conflict (Figure 1 presents our conceptual model). The stereotype content model (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske et al., 2002) proposes that individuals interpret other's behaviors through the innate psychological mechanisms of warmth and competence. This is important because theory and research has long recognized that individuals selectively perceive and interpret information from their social environment differently (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Thus, SCM provides a theoretical lens to understand how employees interpret family-supportive behaviors from supervisors. In addition, we integrate propositions from social role theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Wood & Eagly, 2002) to explore how (a) stereotypes about the job role of a supervisor and (b) stereotypes about the individual that fills this job role will alter the

responses that employees have to FSSB. To test our hypotheses, we conducted two distinct studies. In Study 1, we use an experimental paradigm to establish the relationships between FSSB and employee perceptions of supervisors’ warmth and competence (the two innate dimensions of social evaluations outlined by SCM; Fiske et al., 2002). In Study 2, we conducted a two-wave field survey using a sample of full-time employees who have family commitments (i.e., spouses, children, or other caregiving responsibilities) to test our hypotheses in an applied setting.

Our work contributes to theory, research, and practice in several ways. First, we address calls in the family-supportive supervision literature to “better understand family-supportive supervisor behavior processes and interactions in the workplace on a more micro-level” (Crain & Stevens, 2018, p. 881) and to “explore and integrate the perceptions ... of employees in the process through which FSSBs influence outcomes” (Rofcanin et al., 2017, p. 214). By building upon SCM we offer insights into the social processes related to the perceived effectiveness of family-supportive supervision. Second, we extrapolate theoretical arguments from SRT to explore the importance of supervisor gender and employee role beliefs as boundary conditions that influence how family-supportive supervision is perceived by employees. Finally, we identify practical implications for how the effectiveness of FSSB can be enhanced through perceptions of warmth and competence, which have been found to be malleable (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Jarreau et al., 2019).

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**Theory and Hypotheses**

Family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) refer to discretionary behaviors enacted by supervisors that are supportive towards employees’ families (Hammer et al., 2007). Formally defined, FSSB are the “behaviors exhibited by supervisors that are supportive of families” and conceptualized as “a form of instrumental support that leads to employee perceptions of emotional support from their supervisors” (Hammer et al., 2007, p. 182). Work-family conflict refers to “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). For the purposes of our study we focus on *work-to-family conflict* or *work interference with family* (Carlson et al., 2000). This construct was particularly chosen because FSSB pertains to the work domain which we expect to directly be related to spillover from the work domain to the family domain (Hill et al., 2016; Kossek et al., 2011). Consistent with the extant literature and previous studies (e.g., Crain et al., 2014; Lapierre & Allen, 2006), we conceptualize work-family conflict as strain-based and time-based work interference with family (WIF). This is related to the bandwidth fidelity (Kossek et al., 2011) between FSSB and these specific forms of interrole conflict (Crain et al., 2014).

**The Stereotype Content Model (SCM) and Social Role Theory (SRT)**

The core proposition of SCM is that warmth and competence are two fundamental and innate dimensions of human social cognition. In the words of Cuddy and colleagues (2007, p. 63) warmth and competence are the dimensions by which “people make sense of each other.” Warmth is related to traits such as good-natured, friendliness, helpfulness, and sincerity, whereas competence is related to traits such as skill, intelligence, creativity, and efficacy (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske et al., 2007). From an evolutionary psychology perspective, individuals must make sense of other’s intentions and their capacity to act on these intentions in order to help each other survive (Fiske et al., 2007). Warmth and competence are the dimensions that individuals make these social evaluations, thereby capturing a social and a task dimension respectively. SCM further discusses how individuals can be evaluated as high on one

dimension but low on the other (i.e., the mixed-stereotypes proposition; Fiske et al., 1999). Additionally, the social-structural proposition from SCM states that status and interdependence (cooperation vs. competition) determine perceptions of warmth and competence, as well as emotional and behavioral reactions to these perceptions (Fiske et al., 1999).

The propositions from the stereotype content model are useful for understanding how employees interpret and respond to supervisor behaviors. Supervisors that are perceived as high on one dimension (e.g., high competence) but low on another (e.g., low warmth) can elicit predictably ambivalent responses (Fiske et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 1999). For example, Eckes (2002) found that managers were rated lower on warmth (as compared to intellectuals), but higher on competence (along with intellectuals and millionaires). In their study of visual representations of stereotypes, Imhoff and colleagues' (2013) chose managers to represent an occupation that should not have strong ties to visual features (i.e., sex) and an occupation that is stereotypically perceived as relatively high on warmth but low on competence. Participants were asked to draw faces of managers and schoolteachers, after which independent raters evaluated the faces of managers as more competent but less warm than schoolteachers. That said, when individuals are perceived as both warm and competent, they elicit more favorable evaluations compared to when they are low on one dimension.

In addition to SCM, we integrate propositions from social role theory (SRT; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Wood & Eagly, 2002) to understand when enacting FSSB may lead to favorable or unfavorable perceptions of warmth and competence. The premise of SRT is that stereotypes about certain groups (e.g., supervisors, teachers, doctors, nurses, etc.) are formed based on one's social experiences with these groups (Wood & Eagly, 2015). Behaviors that people in each 'group' displays can influence perceptions about what traits and behaviors are normative for the respective group (Gawronski, 2003). Specific to supervisor-subordinate interactions, initial stereotypes that an employee has about the job role of a supervisor precedes stereotypes of the person that is in that role because hierarchical differences create norms and roles that guide perceptions and behaviors within organizational boundaries (Anderson & Brion, 2014; Johns, 2006). Since employees view supervisors, first and foremost, as representatives of the organization, the role stereotypes of supervisors (opposed to individual differences) are the initial basis through which employees form social evaluations of the person in that role.

Research grounded in social role theory has shown that when individuals act in role congruent ways, they are evaluated more favorably and individuals that violate social role norms are evaluated more unfavorably (Johanson, 2008; Koenig et al., 2011; Rudman & Glick, 2001). For example, traditional gender stereotypes suggest that women should behave more relationally-oriented, whereas men should display less emotions (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Kaufman, 1994). Research on social roles in organizations have consistently found that the role of supervisors are traditionally described with adjectives associated with masculinity (e.g., assertive, competent, dominant) and less so with femininity (e.g., communal, gentle, nurturing, warm; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Gerber, 1988). Although the strength of these role stereotypes as an aggregate across collectives (e.g., societies) has slowly weakened over time (Eagly et al., 2020), they are still held by individuals *within* collectives and remain pervasive in today's workplace (Powell & Butterfield, 2015).

### **Integrating the Stereotype Content Model into Research on Family Supportive Supervision**

We propose that FSSB are generally salient to individuals, particularly those with marital and/or caregiving demands such as those in this study, when forming social evaluations of supervisors. This is because support for one's life outside the work domain is important for physiological health, psychological health, and work performance (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018; Rofcanin et al., 2021; Russo et al., 2018). Additionally, FSSB consists of discretionary behaviors enacted by supervisors with the intention of helping employees conciliating their work and non-work demands (Hammer et al., 2009).

Based on the propositions from the stereotype content model, FSSB will lead employees to have more favorable social evaluations (i.e., warmth and competence) of their supervisors.

**Warmth and Competence.** Warmth judgments are important in terms of evaluations for help and survival (Fiske et al., 2007). Those that are seen as warm are characterized as good-natured and friendly (Cuddy et al., 2007), which are closely aligned with how supportive behaviors are perceived (e.g., Whitebeck et al., 1993). Although supervisor support may not be necessary for ‘survival’ in the purest sense of the word, there is evidence that family-supportive supervision is related to physiological and psychological measures of health (Crain et al., 2014; Hammer et al., 2007). According to SCM, individuals who are perceived as allies (vs. competitors) are perceived as warm (vs. lacking warmth; Cuddy et al., 2007). Therefore, supervisors who are more family-supportive are likely to be perceived as allies through their provision of family-specific instrumental and emotional support. Finally, social judgments of warmth are also related to perceptions of interdependence (Fiske et al., 1999). When supervisors engage in FSSB, such as enacting creative work-family management strategies that can help an employee managing his or her work and family commitments, interdependence between supervisors and subordinates will increase to achieve positive outcomes for both parties (Hammer et al., 2009). Moreover, supervisors who engage in higher levels of FSSB will also be perceived as more *willing* to help their employees (i.e., more communal) and thereby perceived as warmer (Fiske et al., 2007).

Competence judgments are important for evaluating other party’s capacity to act upon their intentions (Cuddy et al., 2008). For example, those that are seen as competent are characterized as confident and skillful (Cuddy et al., 2007), which are traits that have been associated with enacting discretionary behaviors (e.g., Yang et al., 2016). This is because capable employees have more cognitive resources to devote towards extra-role activities, such as taking initiative at work (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Speier & Frese, 1997). Importantly, research has shown that implementing family-supportive supervision effectively is no easy task for supervisors and requires additional training to be successful (Hammer et al., 2011). This is because FSSB are extra-role behaviors that require supervisors to actively go above and beyond their formal job roles (McKersie et al., 2019). In support of these ideas, studies have associated family-supportive behaviors (e.g., instrumental support, role modeling, emotional, and creative work-family management) with competence related traits in supervisors (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Neves, 2011; Xin & Pelled, 2003). Thus, based on SCM and the related research on family-supportive supervision, we argue that employees will form more favorable social evaluations of supervisors who engage in FSSB.

*Hypothesis 1:* FSSB are positively related to social evaluations of supervisor (a) warmth and (b) competence.

### **Boundary Conditions from Social Role Theory: Supervisor Gender and Gender Role Beliefs**

Social role theory argues that there are descriptive and prescriptive role stereotypes about how various groups of individuals are expected to behave which can influence how others’ in their social environment view them (Pica et al., 2018; Rudman & Glick, 2001). A pervasive dimension of role stereotypes that has been the focus of research and practice are how certain social roles are perceived as more masculine or more feminine (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Pichler et al., 2008; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Extrapolating from theory and research on social roles, we identify two factors that can influence employees’ social judgments of family-supportive behaviors: supervisor gender and employee gender role beliefs.

**Supervisor gender.** Behaviors that are perceived as communal, nurturing, and empathic (i.e., supportive behaviors) are stereotypically viewed as more feminine and are expected more of women (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman et al., 1989; Pichler et al., 2010). For example, research on social support

has found that gender roles influence provision of social support, such that it is easier for women versus men to activate social support (Barbee et al., 1993) and that men have more difficulty in being emotionally expressive (Saurer & Eisler, 1990). Behaving in ways that are consistent with these gender norms are viewed more favorably by others, whereas behaving in ways that are inconsistent is seen as gender role violations (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Leskinen et al., 2015). In contrast to the favorable evaluations that one gains when acting in ways that are congruent with social norms, role violations lead to negative social consequences. Past research has found that those who violate gender role norms are ignored, evaluated more negatively, and discredited by others (Rudman & Phelan, 2008; van Dijk & van Engen, 2019). As examples, men that violate gender role expectations by behaving more communally experience increased prejudice and female supervisors who do not behavior communally may experience ostracism (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010; Rudman et al., 2012).

Work-family researchers have accordingly suggested that supervisor gender may affect the expectations of FSSB by employees. Specifically, female supervisors are expected to behave in supportive ways, whereas male supervisors are less likely to be expected to do so (Neglia, 2015). Integrating these arguments within SCM and extrapolating from the propositions outlined in SRT suggests that the relationship between FSSB and perceptions of warmth and competence will be influenced by whether the supervisor who enacts FSSB is female or male (Eagly & Karau, 2002). On one hand, female supervisors who engage in more FSSB is congruent with *gender expectations for a female* and will be viewed more favorably by others, whereas female supervisors who engage in less FSSB will be seen as violating gender norms and, as a consequence, evaluated less favorably by others (Dodge et al., 1995; Rudman et al., 2012). On the other hand, male supervisors who engage in more FSSB will be seen as violating *gender expectations for a male* and viewed less favorably by others, whereas male supervisors who engage in less FSSB are aligned with gender norms and evaluated more favorably by others (Moss-Racusin & Johnson, 2016; Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). Thus, based on social role theory we hypothesize that whether a supervisor is female or male will affect how FSSB are related to evaluations of supervisor warmth and competence.

*Hypothesis 2:* Supervisor gender moderates the positive relationship between FSSB and perceptions of supervisor (a) warmth and (b) competence, such that the relationships are stronger for female supervisors and weaker for male supervisors.

**Employee gender role beliefs.** Just as how the gender of a supervisor can influence evaluations of supervisor behaviors, so too can an employee's gender role beliefs (Kirkpatrick, 1936). Gender role beliefs refer to "prescriptive beliefs about appropriate behavior for men and women" (Kerr & Holden, 1996, p. 3) that varies on a continuum ranging from traditionalism to egalitarianism (Best & Williams, 1993; Kalin & Tilby, 1976). People who hold more traditional perspectives of gender roles tend to see women and men as better suited for fulfilling different social roles which has also spilled over to influence job role stereotypes. For example, scholars have highlighted the pervasive role stereotype of "think-manager, think-male" in organizations that gender role traditionalists hold, which subsequently has implications for how supervisors (regardless of gender) are expected to behave (Powell, 1988; Schein et al., 1996; Sczesny, 2003).

In contrast, people who hold more egalitarian perspectives of gender roles tend to view women and men as more equals (Corrigall & Konrad, 2007; Livingston & Judge, 2008), which has helped weakened the traditional role stereotypes for supervisors and emphasized more relationally oriented behaviors (e.g., shared leadership, coaching, social support; Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Eagly et al., 2020; Johanson, 2008). Accordingly, the literature suggests that traditional role expectations for a 'good' or 'effective' manager is associated with more masculine than feminine qualities (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2009). Extrapolating from research on role stereotypes about managers and integrating these within the SCM suggests that gender role beliefs will influence how supervisor

behaviors are perceived by employees (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Johnson et al., 2008; Pica et al., 2018).

On one hand, engaging in family supportive behaviors at work violates *traditional role expectations for supervisors* (Corrigall & Konrad, 2007; Eagly & Wood, 2012; Hochschild, 1989; Powell et al., 2002). This is because stereotypical feminine characteristics (e.g., gentle, warm) are viewed by gender role traditionalists as incongruent with the role stereotype of an effective manager (Heilman, 2001; Johanson, 2008; Pica et al., 2018). On the other hand, individuals with more egalitarian gender role beliefs do not prescribe masculine or feminine characteristics to their prototype of what a ‘good’ manager should be (Fondas, 1997; Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2009). In fact, gender role egalitarians are more likely to view support for family as an expected component of the supervisory role (Corrigall & Konrad, 2007; Hochschild, 1989) and thus a reflection of the willingness and ability of supervisors to help employees. This suggests that supervisors who engage in FSSB will be seen by gender role traditionalists as violating role stereotypes, leading to less favorable evaluations. In contrast, gender role egalitarians will be seen as behaving in a role congruent manner, thereby garnering more favorable social evaluations.

*Hypothesis 3:* Gender role beliefs moderate the positive relationship between FSSB and perceptions of supervisor (a) warmth and (b) competence, such that the relationships are stronger for employees with egalitarian gender role beliefs and weaker for employees with traditional gender role beliefs.

### **Warmth and Competence as Mediators of the Relationship Between FSSB and Work-Family Conflict**

Research on the stereotype content model argue that social evaluations of warmth and competence are fundamental for two particular reasons: (a) to know another person’s intentions and (b) to know another person’s capability to act upon those intentions (Cuddy et al., 2008). Warmth is the dimension that indicates whether another’s intentions are likely to be positive or negative (i.e., friend or foe) and competence is the dimension that indicates whether an individual is able or unable to act upon their intentions (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske, 2012; Fiske et al., 2002). Therefore, perceptions of warmth and competence that develop as a function of family-supportive supervision gives an employee confidence that supervisors not only have the willingness (via emotional support) to help them balance their work and family roles, but also the ability to successfully enact those intentions (via instrumental support, role modeling, and creative work-family management strategies)<sup>1</sup>.

When employees perceive that their supervisors as willing to help and are capable of enacting their intent to help, they will be more inclined to disclose their work-family goals and seek active assistance with balancing their work-family demands (Hammer et al., 2016; Russo et al., 2018). Perceptions of warmth and competence that develop from FSSB can make employees feel valued and supported in their career, personal needs, and aspirations (Dutton, 2003), which can also reduce their work-family conflict. Work-family research suggests that, under these conditions, employees are less preoccupied with how they are viewed by others (Tyler, 1999) and, as a consequence, become more resourceful and capable of successfully engaging in their work and home roles (Walsh et al., 2019). Thus, through an integration of the propositions from SCM into the family-supportive supervision literature, we theorize that FSSB will be related to lower levels of work-family conflict, such that employees will experience beneficial contextual conditions and gain psychological resources that are instrumental to

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<sup>1</sup> According to Hammer and colleagues (2009), FSSB consist of several sub-facets: *emotional support* includes “willingness to listen” and “making subordinates feel comfortable discussing work-family conflicts”; *instrumental support* includes “helping with scheduling conflicts”; *role modeling* includes “demonstrating effective behaviors”; and *creative work-family management* includes “reallocating job duties to help the work unit function better.”

managing work-family roles (Carmeli & Russo, 2016; Russo et al., 2018).

*Hypothesis 4:* Perceptions of supervisor (a) warmth and (b) competence mediate the relationship between FSSB and work-family conflict.

### Study 1 - Methods

Based on the propositions outlined from the stereotype content model and social role theory, the purpose of Study 1 is to establish the causal relationship between FSSB and perceptions of supervisor warmth and competence (Hypotheses 1a and 1b). We manipulated the level of FSSB enacted by a supervisor across participants. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Walsh et al., 2019), we examined supervisor gender as a moderator of the relationship between FSSB and perceptions of supervisor warmth and competence (Hypotheses 2a and 2b). This resulted in a 2x2 experimental design, with four vignettes that vary based on FSSB (low vs. high) and supervisor gender (female vs. male). Although our hypotheses were developed from existing theory, neither SCM nor SRT have been directly applied to the study of FSSB. As such, it is important to establish the relationship between FSSB and warmth/competence first using a controlled randomized experimental design.

### Sample, Procedures, and Measures

We recruited 192 participants from pool of students enrolled in an undergraduate business course at a West Coast university who were given a nominal amount of extra credit for their participation. We screened participants to ensure that each were (a) working full time, defined as working an average of 40 hours per week or more, (b) were either married and/or had children (the population for which family-supportive supervision would be most relevant for), and (c) paid sufficient attention during the experiment (via attention checks). Twenty-eight participants did not answer the attention checks correctly and were removed from our final sample. The final sample consisted of 164 employees, with an average age of 32.6 years ( $SD = 9.65$ ), 57.9% were Caucasian, and 46.3% were female.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: 2 (high vs. low FSSB) X 2 (male vs. female supervisor). We manipulated FSSB by describing a participant's supervisor using terms that aligned with the conceptual definition of FSSB (Hammer et al., 2007). Specifically, in the high FSSB condition we described the supervisor as someone "who truly cares about the work-life balance of his/her subordinates" and "assists employees in their efforts to successfully manage their dual responsibilities in work and family roles." In the low FSSB condition, we described the supervisor as someone who believes that "work-life balance is not an organizational concern" and "does not speak about his/her personal life with subordinates." We manipulated supervisor gender by using gender-specific names (John and Rebecca) and reinforce them using terms including him/her and s/he throughout each scenario (see Appendix).

After reading the scenarios, participants completed the attention check items along with measures for perceptions of supervisor warmth and perceptions of supervisor competence. Warmth was measured using 4-items ( $\alpha = .95$ ) from Fiske et al. (2002) and participants were asked to "Indicate the extent that each of the words below describes your supervisor from the scenario you read," and responded to the words "tolerant," "warm," "good-natured," and "sincere." Competence was measured using 5-items ( $\alpha = .73$ ) from Fiske et al. (2002) and participants were asked to "Indicate the extent that each of the words below describes your supervisor from the scenario you read," and responded to the words "competent," "confident," "independent," "competitive," and "intelligent." Responses were measured on a scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely well*.

**FSSB manipulation check.** We used the 4-item ( $\alpha = .96$ ) short-form measure of FSSB developed



by Hammer and colleagues' (2013) as a manipulation check. All items began with "After reading the scenario ..." and sample items included "I would feel comfortable talking with my supervisor about my conflicts between work and non-work" and "My supervisor demonstrates effective behaviors in how to juggle work and non-work issues." Responses were measured on a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. A 2 (FSSB) x 2 (supervisor gender) ANOVA on the family-supportive supervision manipulation check indicated a significant main effect of FSSB,  $F_{(1,163)} = 414.69, p < .01, \eta^2 = .72$ , but no effect of supervisor gender,  $F_{(1,163)} = .28, p = .60, \eta^2 = .01$ , or an interaction,  $F_{(1,163)} = 3.45, p = .07, \eta^2 = .02$ . Participants perceived greater levels of family-supportive supervision in the high FSSB condition ( $M = 6.29, SD = .78$ ) than in the low FSSB condition ( $M = 2.23, SD = 1.61$ ). Therefore, our FSSB manipulation produced its intended effects.

### Study 1 - Results

To examine the effect of FSSB and supervisor gender on perceptions of warmth and competence, we conducted a 2 (FSSB) x 2 (supervisor gender) ANOVA. Our results indicated a significant effect of FSSB on perceptions of supervisor warmth,  $F_{(1,163)} = 274.07, p < .01, \eta^2 = .63$ , but no effect for supervisor gender,  $F_{(1,163)} = .13, p = .72, \eta^2 = .00$ , nor was there an interactive effect,  $F_{(1,163)} = 1.26, p = .26, \eta^2 = .01$ . Participants reported higher levels of supervisor warmth in the high FSSB condition ( $M = 6.19, SD = .93$ ) than in the low FSSB condition ( $M = 2.82, SD = 1.56$ ). These results provide support for the relationship between FSSB and supervisor warmth (Hypothesis 1a), but do not support the moderating effect of supervisor gender (Hypothesis 2a).

For supervisor competence, our results indicated a significant effect of FSSB,  $F_{(1,163)} = 10.06, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$ , but no effect for supervisor gender,  $F_{(1,163)} = .52, p = .47, \eta^2 = .00$ , or an interactive effect,  $F_{(1,163)} = 2.48, p = .12, \eta^2 = .02$ . Participants reported higher levels of supervisor competence in the high FSSB condition ( $M = 5.70, SD = .88$ ) than in the low FSSB condition ( $M = 5.19, SD = 1.14$ ). These results provide support for the relationship between FSSB and supervisor competence (Hypothesis 1b), but do not support the moderating effect of supervisor gender (Hypothesis 2b).<sup>2</sup>

### Study 1 - Discussion

The purpose of Study 1 was to establish the causal relationship between FSSB and evaluations of supervisor warmth and supervisor competence using a randomized control design. Although it may be the case that supervisors who tend to exhibit traits such as warm and/or more competent are generally more supportive, employee perceptions of supportive behaviors and actual traits are not one in the same. In other words, regardless of the actual traits that a supervisor possesses, employees can only infer these traits through salient and observable social information, namely behaviors. Therefore, FSSB enacted by supervisors may be interpreted in similar or different ways, depending on the perceiver.

The results from Study 1 suggest that engaging in FSSB can lead to more favorable perceptions of supervisors<sup>3</sup>. These results suggest that it is important to consider how FSSB are viewed by employees, an aspect that has been overlooked thus far in the extant literature. We also examined whether supervisor gender would affect the relationship between FSSB and social evaluations of supervisors. However, our analyses did not reveal significant differences in the relationship between FSSB and perceptions of

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<sup>2</sup> We report results from a 2x2 ANOVA with three predictors (FSSB, gender, FSSB X gender). All of our F-statistics are large and a sample size of 64 will gain power of .805 (see Cohen, 1988). Given a sample size of  $N = 164$  for Study 1, this study is not considered underpowered.

<sup>3</sup> We tested the robustness of these effects by running regression models including the FSSB and supervisor gender conditions and several sets of control variables. These included participant gender, age (in years), ethnicity, education, family role identity, need for caring, extraversion, agreeableness, and trait PA and NA. None of these inclusions altered the significance of the results.

warmth or competence based simply on the gender of the supervisor. That said, these results do not preclude the possibility that individual beliefs about gender roles may importantly bound social evaluations of those occupying a managerial role. As Livingston and Judge (2008) noted, most work-family studies use gender as a proxy for stereotypes related to gender roles, but may be too distal to adequately capture a person’s actual role ideologies. This is because gender role beliefs are not universal, and individuals can substantially vary in the extent they accept social role stereotypes that affect influence how supervisor behaviors are perceived.

Having established the relationship between FSSB and perceptions of warmth/competence based on SCM in Study 1, we build upon these results and test the moderating effects of supervisor gender and employee gender role beliefs to probe the relevance of SRT for perceptions of family-supportive supervision in a field sample of working employees with family and/or caregiving responsibilities using surveys across two time points.

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 Insert Table 1 and 2 about here  
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**Study 2 - Methods**

**Sample and Procedures**

We identified full-time employees from various organizations using referrals from students at a large West Coast university. In total, we received contact information for over five-hundred referrals who were independently contacted by the researchers. Participants were informed of how we received their contact information, what will be asked of them (i.e., two surveys, taking about 10 minutes to complete), and were given the opportunity to enter in a random drawing for one of four \$25 gift cards as a token of our appreciation. The two surveys were administered online and separated by approximately two weeks in time to reduce potential methodological biases from cross-sectional surveys (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Spector, 2006). The first survey measured FSSB, supervisor gender, and gender role orientation and the second survey measured warmth, competence, and work-family conflict. In order to ensure fidelity between our sample, research question, and outcome variable (work-to-family conflict), we included participants who met one or more of the following criteria: were married, had one or more children, and/or were providing eldercare (Carlson et al., 2000).

Three-hundred twenty-two participants completed the first survey, which included demographic information used to screen out participants who did not have a spouse or other dependents. Of the two-hundred and twenty participants that met the inclusion criteria for this study (i.e., family or caregiving responsibilities), 74.1% completed the second survey. This resulted in a final sample of 163 participants. The average age was 28.1 years and 52.5% were female. Participants represented a variety of industries including service (39.86%), retail (23.19%), banking/finance (10.14%), healthcare (7.25%), information technology (5.07%), and manufacturing (4.35%), among others.

**Measures**

**FSSB.** We measured FSSB using the 4-item ( $\alpha = .90$ ) short-form measure validated by Hammer et al. (2013). Sample items included “I feel comfortable talking with my formal supervisor about any conflicts I have between work and non-work” and “My formal supervisor demonstrates effective behaviors in how to juggle work and non-work issues.” Responses were measured on a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

**Supervisor gender.** Supervisor gender was coded as 0 = male and 1 = female.

**Gender role beliefs.** We measured gender role beliefs using the 5-item ( $\alpha = .97$ ) scale used by Judge and Livingston (2008). Lower scores represented more egalitarian role beliefs and higher scores represented more traditional role beliefs. Sample items included “Women are much happier if they stay home and take care of the children” and “A woman’s place is in the home, not the office or shop.” Responses were measured on a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

**Supervisor warmth.** We measured supervisor warmth by adapting the 4-item ( $\alpha = .92$ ) scale from Fiske et al. (2002). Each subordinate was asked “How well does each word below describe your formal supervisor at work?” and followed by the words “tolerant,” “warm,” “good-natured,” and “sincere.” Responses were measured on a scale, ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely well*.

**Supervisor competence.** We measured supervisor competence by adapting the 5-item ( $\alpha = .81$ ) scale from Fiske et al. (2002). Each subordinate was asked “How well does each word below describe your formal supervisor at work?” and followed by the words “competent,” “confident,” “independent,” “competitive,” and “intelligent.” Responses were measured on a scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely well*.

**Work family conflict.** We operationalized work-family conflict as work interference with family using 6-items ( $\alpha = .88$ ) from the strain-based and time-based work interference with family items found in Carlson et al. (2000)<sup>4</sup>. Sample items included “When I get home from work, I am often too frazzled to participate in family activities/responsibilities” and “Due to all the pressures at work, when I come home I am often too stressed to do the things I enjoy.” Responses were measured on a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

**Controls.** Prior research suggests that there can be differences in how supervisors are evaluated based on their gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Powell et al., 2008). Other studies have shown that the gender of an employee can determine their preferences for a female supervisor, a male supervisor, or a supervisor who acts in role congruent ways (Powell et al., 2002; Stoker et al., 2012). Additionally, the gender of the target and perceivers of stereotypes have been found to be closely tied to the reactions to those targets (Xie et al., 2019). Finally, existing research suggests that differences between women and men can have implications for work-family conflict (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Shockley et al., 2017). Thus, we controlled for both supervisor gender and employee gender (0 = male, 1 = female) in our analyses.

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 Insert Figures 2-4 about here  
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### Study 2 - Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the focal variables in Study 2. Similar to the results from Study 1, we found a positive relationship between FSSB and both supervisor warmth ( $r = .66, p < .05$ ) and supervisor competence ( $r = .41, p < .05$ ), thereby supporting

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<sup>4</sup> Given that we did not hypothesize differential relationships between FSSB, stereotypes, and work-family conflict based on the type of conflict (time- or strain-based), items were collapsed into a single scale, which is consistent with previous research (e.g., Allen, et al., 2008).

Hypotheses 1a and 1b.

To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, we mean-centered all explanatory variables prior to creating the interaction terms and entering them into our regression analyses to facilitate the interpretation of our results (Cohen et al., 2003). These results are reported in Table 2. We did not find support for Hypothesis 2a, which predicted that supervisor gender would moderate the relationship between FSSB and supervisor warmth (Model 1:  $b = -.17$ ,  $p = .15$ ). However, we found support for Hypothesis 2b, which predicted that supervisor gender would moderate the relationship between FSSB and supervisor competence (Model 3:  $b = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This interaction is shown in Figure 2.

We found a significant interaction effect of FSSB and gender role beliefs in predicting supervisor warmth (Model 2:  $b = .05$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, the form of the interaction did not support Hypothesis 3a (see Figure 3), which predicted that those with egalitarian (traditional) gender role beliefs would perceive supervisors as more (less) warm. We elaborate on this further in the discussion section. We did, however, find support for Hypothesis 3b, which predicted that FSSB and gender role beliefs would have a significant interaction effect in predicting supervisor competence (Model 4:  $b = -.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This interaction is shown in Figure 4.<sup>5</sup>

To test Hypotheses 4a and 4b, we followed the procedures outlined in Preacher and Hayes (2008) to test the significance of the indirect relationship between FSSB and work-family conflict, via warmth and competence. Supervisor gender and employee gender were included as control variables for warmth, competence, and work-family conflict. Results from these analyses revealed that the negative relationship between FSSB and work-family conflict was mediated through both supervisor warmth ( $b = -.17$ ; 95%-CI [-.26, -.10]) and supervisor competence ( $b = -.04$ ; 95%-CI [-.08, -.01]). Both of the bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (20,000 replications) excluded zero. These results support Hypotheses 4a and 4b, which provide empirical evidence that identifies warmth and competence as important mechanisms that can explain why FSSB can reduce work-family conflict (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Rofcanin et al., 2017).

### Supplemental Analyses

We conducted supplemental analyses (Hollenbeck & Wright, 2017) to examine whether these indirect effects differed (Hayes, 2015), based upon the moderating effects of supervisor gender and gender role beliefs on perceptions of warmth and competence. The bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals from these analyses showed that the indirect effect of FSSB on work-family conflict via supervisor competence was not significant for male supervisors ( $b = -.02$ , 95%-CI [-.05, .01]) or female supervisors ( $b = -.05$ , 95%-CI [-.10, .01]). We found that the relationship between FSSB and work-family conflict via warmth varied for individuals with different levels of gender role beliefs (Egalitarian:  $b = -.08$ , 95%-CI [-.15, -.01]); Traditional: ( $b = -.02$ ; 95%-CI [-.04, .01]); Index of mediated moderation = .01, 95% CI [.01, .03]). We also found that the relationship between FSSB and work-family conflict via warmth varied for individuals with different levels of gender role beliefs (Egalitarian:  $b = -.13$ , 95%-CI [-.21, -.06]); Traditional: ( $b = -.19$ ; 95%-CI [-.27, -.10]); Index of mediated moderation = -.01 (95% CI [-.03, -.01]). These results are aligned with our results for Hypotheses 2 and 3. Table 3 presents a summary of these results.

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<sup>5</sup> Moderated multiple regression (MMR) remains one of the most common techniques for assessing interaction effects in organizational studies, however it is recognized to have low statistical power (Aguinis, 2002). As with many field samples, this is a concern in Study 2. Thus, to test our hypotheses, we used the PROCESS macros which uses bootstrapping as a resampling strategy to assess the statistical significance of our interactions (Preacher, et al . 2007). This analytical strategy is useful not only because it improves accuracy of confidence intervals, but also because it can help account for factors that can influence statistical power, such as sample size.

The results from these analyses suggest that (a) the relationship between FSSB and competence is moderated by gender, such that female supervisors who engage in low FSSB are viewed more unfavorably and (b) employees with more egalitarian role beliefs view supervisors who exhibit low FSSB more unfavorably as well. This patterns of findings indicate the possibility that a three-way interaction between FSSB, supervisor gender, and role beliefs may explain perceptions of warmth and competence.<sup>6</sup> To test this possibility, we conducted additional post-hoc analyses to probe these relationships. Our analyses did not reveal the presence of a three-way interaction between FSSB, supervisor gender, and employee role beliefs in predicting warmth ( $b = -.01, p = .87$ ) or competence ( $b = -.01, p = .75$ ).

**Study 2 - Discussion**

The purpose of Study 2 was to build upon the results and address the limitations from the prior Study 1. Specifically, we (a) replicated the relationships between FSSB and perceptions of warmth and competence, (b) included gender role beliefs as a moderator, and (c) tested our hypotheses using field data collected at two-time points to reduce the potential effects of methods bias.

Results from this study replicated the relationships established from our experimental vignette in Study 1 and provided general support for our hypotheses. We found that the relationship between FSSB and work family conflict was mediated through perceptions of warmth and competence. However, in this study (but not Study 1) supervisor gender moderated the relationship between FSSB and perceived supervisor competence. We also found evidence that gender role beliefs moderated the relationship between FSSB and both supervisor warmth and supervisor competence, although the form of the interaction was not precisely what we predicted.

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 Insert Table 3 about here  
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**General Discussion**

Based on the core propositions from the stereotype content model (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske et al., 2002), our results suggest that FSSB are importantly related to how employees evaluate their supervisors, specifically along the innate dimensions of warmth and competence. Warmth and competence were found to mediate the relationship between FSSB and work-family conflict, which helps explain why FSSB is useful in reducing psychological strain. Based on social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001), our results further suggest that supervisor gender and employee role beliefs are important boundary conditions that can strengthen or weaken these relationships. The implications of our results for theory, future research, and practice are discussed below.

**Theoretical Contributions and Implications**

An important question for applied psychologists stemming from the stereotype content literature is how managers can be perceived as less ambivalent (i.e., as both warm *and* competent). To date, the literature has focused more on the implications of mixed stereotypes (i.e., that managers are perceived ambivalently due to their being stereotyped as competent but not warm) opposed to *how* certain social groups of individuals (e.g., those in supervisory roles) can mitigate these harmful role stereotypes. We found support for our hypotheses that supervisors who are engage in FSSB are perceived as more warm and more competent. We proposed this because FSSB are discretionary behaviors that require effort from

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<sup>6</sup>We thank an anonymous reviewer for their helpful suggestion.

the supervisor to demonstrate not only interpersonal competence but also empathy and caring behaviors towards employees (McKersie et al., 2019). This has important implications for SCM as it suggests that individuals in mixed-stereotyped groups can change how others stereotype them by behaving in ways that are inconsistent with the mixed stereotype (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Jarreau et al., 2019). Thus, a key implication of our findings suggests that future research should consider how a person who violates the mixed stereotypes of their social roles (e.g., supervisors who are warm) can actually shift the role stereotypes of individuals whom they interact with at the individual-level.

In addition, SRT suggests that stereotypes of certain roles (e.g., supervisors) develop by watching how people in that social group are expected behave (Koenig & Eagly, 2014) and interactions with individuals in these roles are important for how a person generalizes their evaluations of others in the same role (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Indeed, recent research has found evidence that societies, as a whole, are gradually shifting way from more traditional gendered role perspectives towards embracing a more egalitarian conception of role stereotypes (Eagly et al., 2020). Yet, there remains individuals within societies and organizations that hold varying engrained role beliefs, despite these macro-level trends. This is also true in the most gender egalitarian countries, where it has been demonstrated that many men, who like to consider themselves as egalitarian, tend to engage in nonegalitarian behaviors, such as giving priority to their own careers rather than the ones of their partner when making decision about relocation, or prefer traditional home-centered partners (Keizer & Komter, 2015). Thus, a key theoretical implication of our findings is the usefulness of applying SCM and social role theory to individual views within organizations, thereby providing research with precision in theorizing.

**Implications for family-supportive supervision research.** The overarching purpose of our study was to leverage propositions from SCM and SRT to develop a conceptual framework that advances our understanding of how employees respond to FSSB, and how these responses are related to work interference with family. We demonstrate across two studies that FSSB are related to perceptions of supervisor warmth and supervisor competence. In Study 1, the mean difference (between supervisors low and high on FSSB) was larger for warmth than competence, suggesting that FSSB can shape employee perceptions of the dimension on which supervisors are stereotypically perceived to be weaker (i.e., warmth). Moreover, our results from Study 1 suggests that supervisors who exhibited low FSSB resulted in larger warmth decrements than competence. This suggests that perceptions of warmth may be considered more primary in the workplace environment, at least when employees form perceptions of supervisors based on FSSB.

We also found in Study 2 that perceptions of warmth and competence mediated the relationship between FSSB and work interference with family. These findings serve to highlight one of the potential mechanisms through which the effects of FSSB are transmitted to influence employee work outcomes. Notably, our results add to the literature by demonstrating that not only does family-supportive supervision help explain employees' experience of work interference with family – it might also influence supervisors' personal reputation and image, as the stereotypes of supervisors can be shaped and enhanced by the enactment of specific family-supportive behaviors. Researchers can build upon these results to both consider alternative mechanisms through which FSSB can reduce work-family conflict or explore alternative moderators that may, for example, qualify the relationship between perceptions of warmth/competence and how these relate to work interfering with family.

Additionally, we expand current research on boundary conditions that shape the effectiveness of FSSB. More specifically, our research helps us elucidate both *which* supervisors (women or men) are more likely to elicit favorable social evaluations, and *who* is more sensitive to the presence of family-supportive behaviors at work (egalitarians or traditionalists). As to the former, this is important because research to date has been somewhat unclear as to whether supervisor gender matters when it comes to FSSB (e.g., Neglia, 2015; Walsh et al., 2019). Our results in Study 2 suggest that supervisor gender

moderates the relationship between FSSB and perceptions of supervisor competence. Male supervisors are generally perceived as more competent than female supervisors (consistent with a large body of previous research), but female supervisors are evaluated more favorably if they engage in more FSSB. Research on supervisory roles has suggested that high levels of interpersonal skills, including supervisor support, are key to effectiveness in supervisory work (Beenen & Pichler, 2016; Scullen et al., 2003). Consistent with this, one of our key contributions is highlighting the conditions under which women supervisors may be seen in a more favorable manner (i.e., when they provide high levels of FSSB).

Our findings partially support our proposition and suggest that gender role beliefs, although rarely investigated in work-family research (Livingston & Judge, 2008), are important in terms of how employees react to FSSB. When it comes to supervisor competence, we found support for our proposition that traditionalists viewed supervisors that engaged in FSSB less favorably. Based upon our additional analyses, these effects carried through to reducing work-family conflict. The results for supervisor warmth showed that higher levels of FSSB were associated with higher perceptions of warmth for individuals with gender egalitarian and traditional gender role beliefs. This is inconsistent with our proposition that traditionalists should react less favorably than egalitarians. Instead, it suggests that both egalitarians and traditionalists view supervisors as warm at high levels of FSSB. We feel that this counterintuitive finding is interesting and warrants future research. As other scholars have argued in the past (e.g., Livingston & Judge, 2008), more research is needed as to how gender role beliefs are related to the work-family interface, and our work is an important step in that direction.

### **Practical Implications**

Perhaps the most fundamental implication of our research for organizations is that if managers are interested in reducing employee's work-family conflict, they should pay attention not only to family-supportiveness but also to employee perceptions of warmth and competence, especially in connection with how they implement family-supportive supervision. Our results suggest that FSSB have a larger effect on warmth than competence. This is interesting given that managers are stereotypically viewed ambivalently (i.e., competent but not warm; Eckes, 2002; Imhoff et al., 2013; Powell & Butterfield, 2015). Our results, therefore, suggest that encouraging managers to engage in FSSB can not only reduce work-family conflict, but it can also potentially change the stereotype of a given manager from mixed to uniform (i.e., warm and competent)<sup>7</sup>. Since warmth perceptions have been found to be malleable (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Jarreau et al., 2019), managers might want to focus their efforts in seeking to enhance their warmth perceptions.

There are a variety of other means by which managers' warmth is tied to FSSB. Research from a variety of disciplines suggests that body language, including making eye contact and smiling, are important for establishing perceptions of warmth (Heintzman et al., 1993; Wang et al., 2016), which are also forms of emotional support. It is possible that FSSB training is a way to increase such warmth perceptions. Some dimensions of FSSB, such as emotional support, are more likely to elicit perceptions of warmth than are other dimensions, such as creative work-family management. Our research suggests that it is therefore important for managers to pay attention to their family supportive behaviors. In other words, it is important for managers to seem truly empathic and caring when engaging in supportive behaviors, which is consistent with the broader literature on social support (e.g., Cohen & Wills, 1985; Van der Graff et al., 2012).

These findings are also relevant for work-family interventions that target supervisors as a way to change family-supportive supervision, work-family practices such as scheduling control, and work-family culture (e.g., Baral & Bhargava, 2010; Hammer et al., 2011; Kossek et al., 2014; O'Driscoll et al., 2003).

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<sup>7</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for their helpful feedback here.

The implication here is that supervisor support training should focus not only on the types of behaviors that are important for reducing work-family conflict (Hammer et al., 2011), but also on training supervisors to implement these behaviors in a way that seems truly empathetic and caring (Jazaieri et al., 2013). Training supervisors in how to creatively manage employee schedules or how to role-model work-family balance is one thing, but training managers in how to be warm, empathic, caring and nurturing – all of which seem essential to the effectiveness of FSSB – may be even more critical when it comes to reducing work-family conflict. For example, this could involve teaching managers about what behaviors are specific to warmth and competence, why such behaviors are important, and how to display these types of behaviors. Future work-family intervention researchers should consider not only training managers to be warmer, but they should also consider investigating perceptions of competence and warmth as more proximal predictors of work-family conflict than FSSB.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

While our study has several important strengths, including a mixed-method, two-study design with an experiment and a field study, there are several limitations which should be noted and considered in future research. First, we sought to examine the robustness of our results through analyzing several alternative models, however we recognize that there are other constructs that may serve as important correlates of how employees form social evaluations of their supervisors. Future research should seek to better understand this relationship through more relationally-oriented variables between supervisors and employees, such as coaching, friendship quality, and interpersonal affect. Second, we did not measure gender role beliefs in Study 1 (although we did so in Study 2). Thus, future research should seek to confirm our results or identify possible contextual factors that may influence the effects that we found in Study 1. Finally, as with most field research, our results from Study 2 are based on a relatively small sample that may be underpowered for examining the different interactions hypothesized (Aguinis, 2002; Mone et al., 1996). However, it is important to note that our field sample was drawn from a population of working adults with family and/or caregiving responsibilities, the population most relevant for our research question. Moreover, we tested our hypotheses using analytical techniques that improve the accuracy of our inference testing to account for factors (e.g., sample size) that can be affected by statistical power.

### **Conclusion**

As employees juggle multiple work and family commitments, they increasingly expect their supervisors to be supportive of their work and nonwork aspirations. Our research has taken steps to demonstrate that engaging in FSSB is not only beneficial for employees by reducing their experience of work-family conflict, but also important for how supervisors are socially evaluated by employees. Engaging in family supportive behaviors can represent an important supervisory practice to change managerial role stereotypes from being ambivalent (i.e., being traditionally perceived as competent *but not* warm) to uniformly positive (i.e., both competent *and* warm). Moreover, the results from this study demonstrate that employees' reaction to FSSB depends upon role beliefs, such that traditionalists react less favorably towards these behaviors. Managers may use this information to calibrate their family supportive efforts and enhance the effectiveness of these behaviors by targeting those employees who are more in need of support and who are also more responsive to them, thus resulting in decreased work-family conflict.



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Table 1

*Study 2 - Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 FSSB	4.39	1.70	(.90)						
2 Gender role beliefs	3.07	2.17	-.28*	(.97)					
3 Supervisor competence	5.24	1.15	.41*	-.05	(.81)				
4 Supervisor warmth	4.85	1.66	.66*	-.27*	.48*	(.92)			
5 Work-family conflict	3.19	1.23	-.59*	.31*	-.42*	-.62*	(.88)		
6 Supervisor gender	0.58	0.49	-.05	-.17*	-.14	.01	-.05	-	
7 Gender	0.52	0.50	.01	-.39*	-.06	.02	-.10	.18*	-

*Notes.* N = 163; reliabilities on diagonal; Supervisor gender and gender are coded 0 = male and 1 = female;

†*p* < .10, \**p* < .05

Table 2  
*Study 2 - Results of regression analyses*

Variables	<u>Warmth</u>				<u>Competence</u>				<u>Work-family conflict</u>	
	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>		<i>Model 4</i>		<i>Model 5</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Gender	.04	.20	-.11	.20	-.09	.17	.02	.17	-.20	.15
FSSB	.75**	.09	.59**	.06	.14 <sup>†</sup>	.08	.35**	.04	-.21**	.06
Supervisor gender	.12	.20	.03	.20	-.28 <sup>†</sup>	.17	-.18	.16	-.17	.15
FSSB X supervisor gender	-.17	.12			.23*	.10				
Gender role beliefs			-.07	.05			.02	.04		
FSSB X gender role beliefs			.05*	.02			-.10**	.02		
Warmth									-.27**	.06
Competence									-.14 <sup>†</sup>	.07
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.46		.47		.21		.31		.46	

Notes. *N* = 163. <sup>†</sup>*p* < .10, \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01



Table 3  
*Study 2 - Mediated-moderation results for work-family conflict across levels of gender role beliefs*

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Mediator</i>	<i>Moderator (2<sup>nd</sup> stage)</i>	<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Level of moderator</i>	<i>Indirect effect</i>	<i>LL 95% CI</i>	<i>UL 95% CI</i>
FSSB	Competence	Gender role beliefs	WFC	Low	-.08*	-.151	-.003
				Moderate	-.05*	-.095	-.002
				High	-.02	-.045	.001
FSSB	Warmth	Gender role beliefs	WFC	Low	-.13*	-.208	-.063
				Moderate	-.16*	-.234	-.087
				High	-.19*	-.273	-.102

*Notes:* N = 163; CI = bias corrected confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Mediation is supported when the confidence interval excludes zero (20,000 bootstrap replications).

\*  $p < .05$

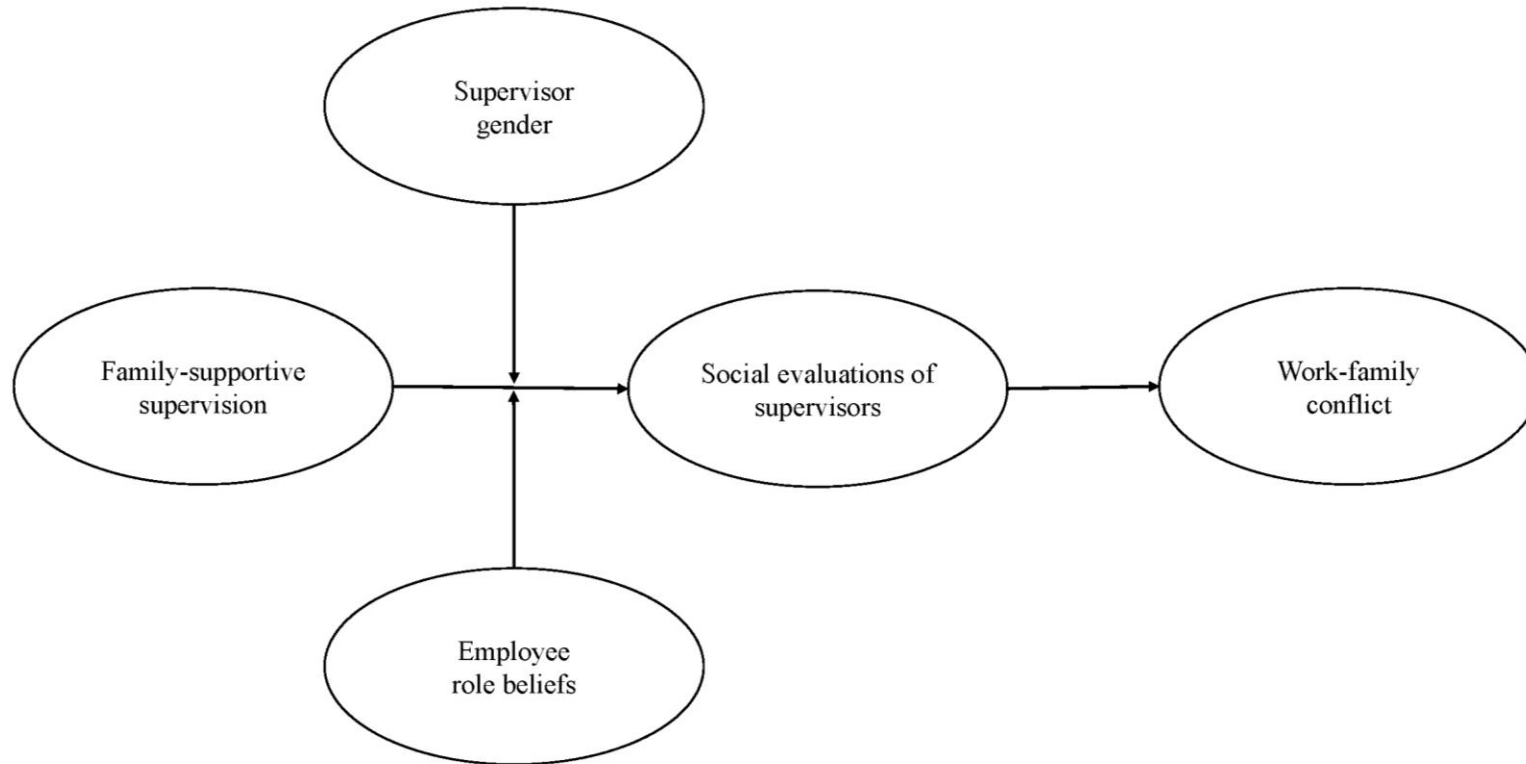


Figure 1. Conceptual model

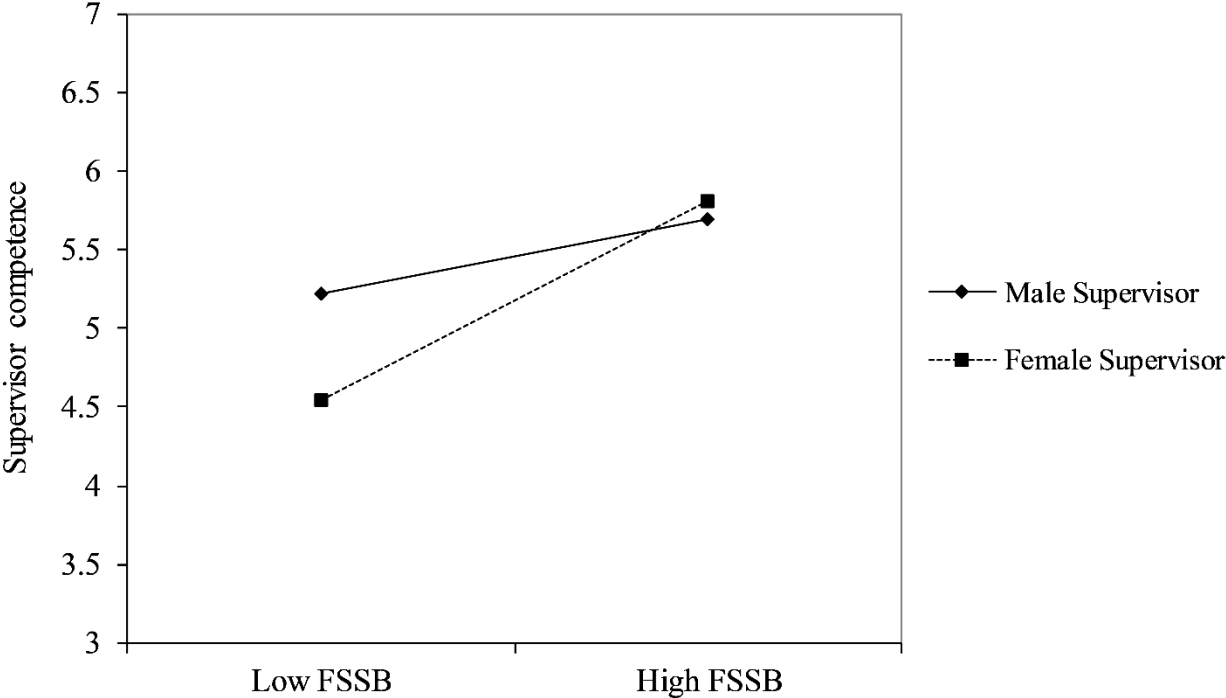


Figure 2. Study 2 - Interaction between FSSB and supervisor gender in predicting supervisor competence

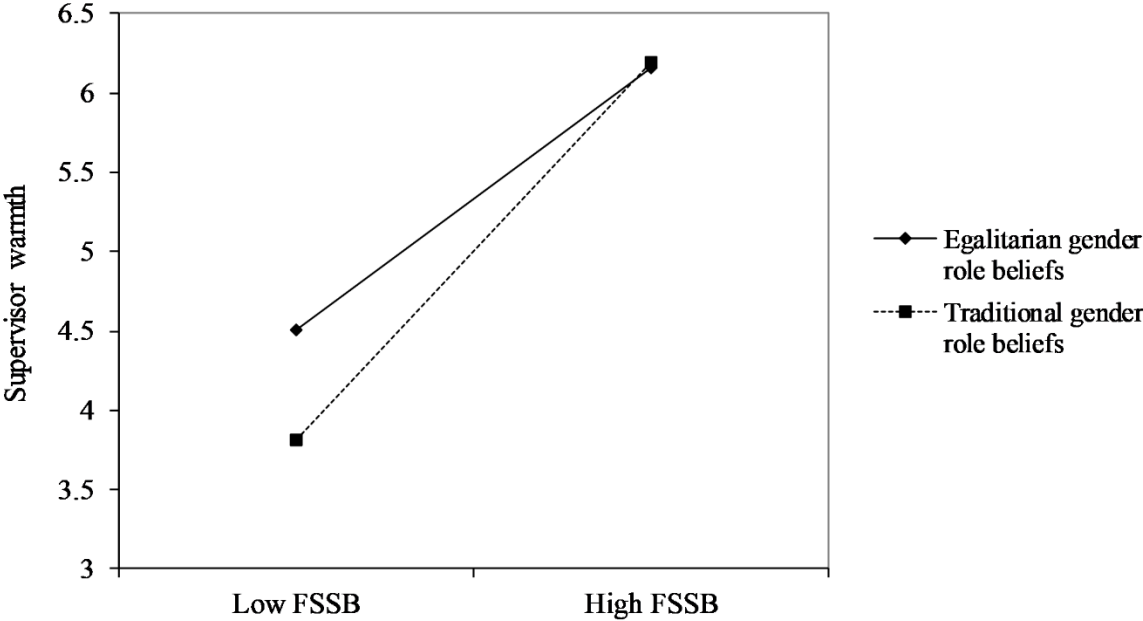


Figure 3. Study 2 - Interaction between FSSB and gender role beliefs in predicting supervisor warmth

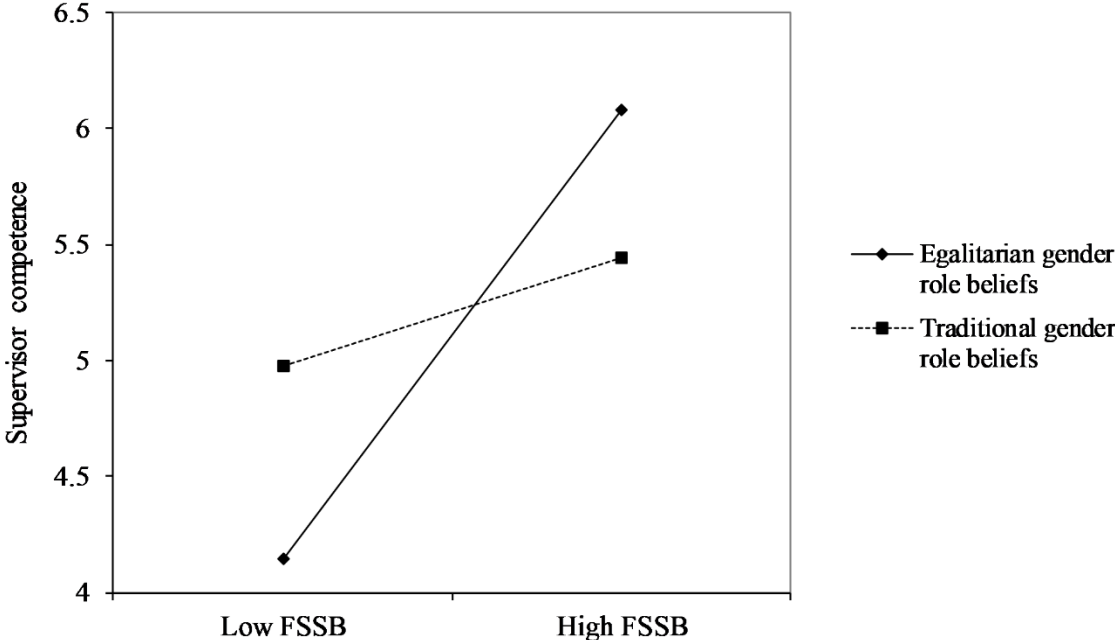


Figure 4. Study 2 - Interaction between FSSB and gender role beliefs predicting supervisor competence

### Appendix

*\* Differences in supervisor gender manipulations are shown in parentheses*

#### Scenario (High FSSB)

It has been one year since you joined your current organization and you noticed that (John/Rebecca), in addition to be a very effective manager, is a type of supervisor who truly cares about the work-life balance of (his/her) subordinates.

(John/Rebecca) believes that achieving work-life balance is a meaningful goal in every one's life, beyond being good for the organization. Moving from this belief, (s/he) assists employees in their efforts to successfully manage their dual responsibilities in work and family roles. For example, (s/he) usually reacts favorably to scheduling requests for flexibility, (s/he) is not afraid of redesigning the way the work is done to facilitate employee effectiveness on and off the job, and (s/he) encourages subordinates to cultivate other interests beyond the work.

(John/Rebecca) makes employees feel comfortable discussing family-related issues and (s/he) demonstrates respect and sympathy in regard to employees' family responsibilities. (John/Rebecca) is consistent with (his/her) work-life balance credo: (s/he) seeks to achieve (himself/herself) a good level of work-life balance and is willing to share with (his/her) subordinates examples of strategies and behaviors that may lead to desirable work-life outcomes.

#### Scenario (Low FSSB)

It has been one year since you joined your current organization and you noticed that (John/Rebecca), in addition to be a very effective manager, is a type of supervisor who does NOT really care about the work-life balance of (his/her) subordinates.

(John/Rebecca) believes that achieving work-life balance is NOT an organization concern and that employees need to leave their family and personal responsibilities behind the office's door. (John/Rebecca) demonstrates very low respect and sympathy in regard to employees' family responsibilities and because of (his/her) attitude, employees do NOT feel very comfortable discussing family-related issues with (him/her). (S/he) usually reacts negatively to scheduling requests for flexibility, and (s/he) rarely redesigns the way the work is done to facilitate employee effectiveness on and off the job.

(John/Rebecca) is consistent with (his/her) work-life balance credo: (s/he) never speaks about (his/her) personal life with (his/her) subordinates nor is (s/he) willing to share with them examples of strategies and behaviors that may lead to desirable work-life outcomes.



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**Author/s:**

Yu, A;Pichler, S;Russo, M;Hammer, L

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