Women and Men, Moms and Dads: Leveraging Social Role Change to Promote Gender Equality

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Abstract

This chapter examines gender inequalities in work and family outcomes through the lens of identity construction with a focus on the power of the social context in driving identity conflict. Cultural scripts dictate normative expectations around how to fulfill the roles of *mother*, *father*, and *worker*. The content of the scripts generates greater identity conflict for women than men as they strive to succeed in both roles. This conflict is driven in part by a tighter connection between the role *mom* and the category *women* than between *dad* and the category *men*, and in part by greater overlap in the roles of *dad* and *professional* than *mom* and *professional*. Moreover, *mothers* as a category are viewed as higher in essentialism than fathers. These perceptions affect both perceivers' judgments of how the genders ought to fulfill these roles, and the self-perceptions of young women and men, such that when women anticipate greater role conflict, they engage in identity shifting on an implicit self-association task, whereas men demonstrate identity stability. Women also intend to make greater accommodations to work hours due to children. Changing the content of these social roles through strengthening the tie between *dads* and *men*, promoting less gendered division of caretaking responsibilities, and changing normative scripts for young professionals are discussed as pathways for promoting greater gender equality in both work and family outcomes.

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The feminist movement aimed to increase equality between the genders in part through the liberation of women from the domestic sphere. It fought against the assumption that women's primary duties revolve around the household, and instead promoted inclusion and acceptance of women in the workforce. The social landscape certainly looks much different standing in the shoes of young women and men in 2018 than it did in the 1960s. Still, as we will argue in this chapter, the social roles of moms and dads, of women and men, and of workers, remain steeped in expectations and behavioral norms that guide young people's actions in ways that contribute to continued gender inequalities on both the home and work fronts. We use the concept of cultural scripts, defined in more detail below, to capture these societal expectations and norms. We argue that these cultural scripts constitute a larger social context in which young men and women engage with their roles as parents and workers. Importantly, this social context provides standards against which women and men judge their performance and evaluate their successes and failures. To the extent this context retains vestiges of old role assignments in which women are relegated to the domestic sphere and men to the work world, it continues to affect self-evaluations in subtle and often unacknowledged ways. Moreover, discussions regarding gender, work, and family in both the social science literature and popular media often frame these dynamics as individual *choices* (e.g., the "lean-in" movement, Sandberg, 2013), without sufficient appreciation of broader forces operating through the social context (Faludi, 2013). A core tenet of social psychology is the power of the situation to shape the thoughts, beliefs, expectations, and consequently, the behavior of individuals. We suggest that the power of the situation has been less appreciated in discussions of work-family conflict than is perhaps ideal. The primary goal of this chapter is to develop an argument backed by research evidence to this effect. We argue that an important ingredient for achieving gender parity is to alter social roles, in turn changing the social context in which young people exist. We begin with a brief description of some of the notable changes that have already taken place that facilitate gender parity, as well as some of the significant inequalities that remain.

Social Change, but also Enduring Gender Inequalities

Within the United States, the portion of the workforce accounted for by women has increased from about 30% in 1950 to 47% in 2017 (Geiger & Parker, 2018), and women continue to increase their share of financial contributions to the family (Parker & Stepler, 2017). Women are now significantly more likely to be college educated than men (in 2015, 57% of all BA degrees were earned by women), and more likely to earn advanced degrees (in 2015, 60% of all Masters degrees were earned by women, and 52% of Doctorate level degrees, including Ph.D.'s, M.D.'s, and J.D.'s; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The gender gap in pay demonstrates both a narrowing of the difference between men and women, and the striking persistence of inequality. In 1980, women earned 64 cents for every dollar earned by men, whereas that number was 83 cents in 2017. The gap was thus narrowed by an impressive 47%, and yet this narrowing took 40 years to achieve and a substantial inequity remains (Geiger & Parker, 2018). Additionally, beliefs about how the genders should behave in a family context remain traditional – a substantial majority of the public continues to say that in order for a man to be a good husband or partner, it is very important for him to be able to support his family financially (71%), whereas only 32% say the same is true for a woman (Parker & Stepler, 2017). Moreover, the American public feels strongly that the best situation for young children is to have a mother who is **not** working full-time. A mere 16% of adults surveyed by the Pew Research Center endorsed full-time work by mothers as the ideal situation for young children; rather, 42% endorsed part-time work, and a full 33% said a mother who doesn't work at all is the ideal. This pattern was largely the same even among mothers who were themselves full-time workers. When asked what is ideal for women (as opposed to young children), the frequencies were nearly identical, whereas when asked what is best for men, fully 70% of respondents said that full-time work is best (Parker, 2015b). As a society, we are communicating to our girls and young women that they are capable and smart, that they are expected to achieve in the educational and career spheres. Indeed, women match or exceed their male counterparts in educational accomplishments, and young women and men continue to look very similar to one another, *so long as the women are childless* (Williams & Ceci, 2012). Aligning with public attitudes about what is best for young children and mothers, women continue to bear a disproportionate share of childrearing responsibilities (in 2011, 14 hours per week relative to 7

by men, Parker & Wang, 2013), and are more likely to interrupt their careers in order to care for children (Parker, 2015a). Women report this decision adversely affects their career outcomes, and yet 90% of women who make such accommodations report that they are glad they did so (Parker, 2015a).

Identity Construction and The Social Self

We suggest that cultural scripts shape young people's sense of self by establishing norms for what is considered successful role fulfillment. Cultural scripts are patterns of social interaction often learned from parents and other social actors (Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984; Willard, 1988; see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQPn08wEhF4). They are the typical patterns of interaction observed in a given social milieu. Internalizing these observed patterns of social interactions influences one's social values and beliefs. They shape one's mental representation of how the world works, and they affect thought patterns and communication, bringing these in line with social norms. Cultural scripts are prescriptive in nature and guide expectations of how to behave in a given context. One's sense of self is strongly affected by cultural scripts, because they serve as guides for what constitutes success and failure in a given social role. Members of a society carry these expectations; they shape not only one's sense of self and one's behavior, but also inform judgments of others' behavior. As more women have entered the workforce over the past 60 years, it has become more acceptable, and indeed more expected, that young women compete and succeed on par with their male counterparts in educational and career aspirations. We argue, however, that at the point when children enter their lives, the content of cultural scripts around the role of mother places young women in a nearly impossible situation by setting expectations for succeeding as a *mom* in direct opposition to those for succeeding as a young professional. Similarly, cultural scripts around the role of father place young men in the position of acting as provider, forcing them into demanding jobs that typically leave too little time for family. What are the psychological processes that come into play as young people move from preparing for careers into their roles both as young workers and as mothers and fathers, and how do those dynamics contribute to the gender inequalities that persist in society?[1]

Consider the schematic in Figure 1. At the core of our psychological identity is our sense of self, what Baumeister (1998) referred to as reflexive consciousness – who am I, what is my place in the world,

am I a valued, accepted, and needed person in the world? In large measure, this self-concept is determined by our knowledge of ourselves as interpersonal beings. That is, our identity is shaped out of the social groups to which we belong, our interpersonal relationships, and the social roles we occupy (Correll & Park, 2005). These self-aspects are organized by centrality and salience in an identity hierarchy (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). One of the most important, central, and salient social groups to which we belong is our gender group. Kids attend to and categorize others on the basis of gender at a very young age, and it is one of the first social categories for which they indicate awareness (Gelman & Taylor, 2000). Gender is visually salient, and much of the social world is organized along gender categories (Rothbart & Taylor, 1992). Similarly, two of our most important social roles are what we do for paid work (our job, career, or profession) and our role as a parent. The schematic denotes that these self-aspects are experienced in relation to one another. Solid lines indicate congruent relations, with heavier lines indicating a stronger tie between the roles. Dashed lines indicate an incongruent relation between the self-aspects, with heavier dashes indicating greater incongruence. Thus, self-aspects may co-exist easily, perhaps even facilitating one another, or they may exist in an oppositional relation. Cultural scripts – prescriptive expectations regarding how best to enact these roles – drive the experienced congruency among these self-aspects. A conservationist who works as the marketing director for a large oil company will struggle with holding those two identities simultaneously in reflexive consciousness because of the conflicting nature of the cultural script associated with each.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Sociometer Theory (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995) provides a useful lens through which to consider the consequences of conflicting identities. According to Sociometer Theory, from an evolutionary perspective, humans had a much greater chance of survival if they banded together in groups to fight threats rather than remaining isolated, in part because humans lack claws, teeth, venom, or other deadly physical attributes that might provide a defense against enemies. To promote affiliative behavior in the service of survival, humans developed a "need to belong" to social groups. In order to

gauge whether one is included in social groups, humans needed a gauge for assessing belonging. Self-esteem serves as this barometer – an indicator for how well one is doing with respect to inclusion in social groups. Behaving in accordance with societal expectations results in positive feedback, increasing self-esteem, and leading one to feel safe and secure as an included member of the group. Thus, in contrast to conceptualizations of self-esteem as an individualistic, self-serving construct, Sociometer Theory argues that the point of self-esteem is to serve as a signal for how well one is doing with respect to inclusion in social groups. Being a good group member is desirable because this increases the likelihood of continued inclusion in the group by others, which in turn increases one's chance of survival. A huge factor that drives self-esteem, then, is an evaluation of whether one is adequately fulfilling important social roles. Am I an accepted, valued, and needed member of my social groups?

Social comparison processes serve as the primary means for evaluating one's standing in the group (Festinger, 1954). What behaviors are expected of good group members? What defines the prototypical ideal group member? Critically, how do I measure up to this ideal? The problem for women is that to the extent cultural scripts define the ideal mother and the ideal professional with characteristics or behavioral expectations that are in opposition to one another, it is impossible for them to simultaneously feel good about themselves in these two roles. Cultural scripts of the ideal mom portray her as putting her children first, as being foremost devoted and available to her children. A "good" mother organizes her world around her children, and their needs come first. A successful professional is similarly expected to embrace total devotion and availability, but in this case to work. A stellar professional is one who organizes life around work, who lives and breathes work. For men, these two identities do not conflict to the same degree for at least two reasons. One is that the strength of the connection between the social category *women* and the social role *mom* is much tighter than that of *men* and *dad*. As discussed below, when perceivers think *women*, they think *mom*, whereas when they think *men*, they think a variety of social roles, only one of which is *dad*. This is true both in the strength of association between the categories and roles, and in the degree of overlap in the trait content that defines *women* and *moms* relative to *men* and *dads*. Thus, women are so strongly defined by their role as mothers that this will compete with their ability to experience a sense of success, inclusion, and self-

definition in their professional role. Second, the trait content of the social role of *dad* overlaps to a greater degree with *professional* then does that of *mom*. As a consequence, even when men do bring to mind their role as *dads,* this does not result in the same sort of jarring conflict in their self-evaluations of self-as-dad and self-as-professional as is the case for women.

It is, simply put, much more difficult for women to successfully navigate their roles as *parent* and *professional* simultaneously in terms of the inner psychological workings of their self-concepts, and to feel they are succeeding in both at the same time, than it is for men. This is not to say that men don't also experience conflicting work and family demands. But men are less defined by their role as fathers, and the cultural script that defines a "good" father is more congruent with that of a "good" professional, resulting in less psychological conflict for men as they evaluate their place in their world, how good a group member they are, whether they are accepted and belong. For women, these two identities are largely set in opposition to one another. Whether the cultural scripts are internalized and become one's own view of the ideal mom and professional, or whether they are recognized as prescriptive norms held not by the self but by society, the ensuing psychological conflict is problematic. In his work on self-guides, Higgins (1987) argues that when one perceives a discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self (the situation when one has internalized the cultural scripts), one tends to experience aversive emotions with low arousal levels, such as sadness, dejection, and depressed mood. A discrepancy between the actual self and ought self (where the scripts are not necessarily internalized, but one is aware that this is what the social group expects in order to be viewed as a good group member) also leads to aversive, but in this case, high arousal emotions, such as anxiety and guilt.

Whether cultural scripts are internalized or not, both low arousal and high arousal emotions decrease self-esteem – they make it more difficult to feel good about the self. Self-esteem, in turn, serves as a barometer for gauging how good a group member one is, for whether one is likely to continue to be included in the group. Low self-esteem, or a low reading on the sociometer barometer, signals to one that action must be taken in order to rectify the situation. It serves as a cue to the person to engage in behavior to bring the actual self more nearly into line with the ideal and ought selves. Given the oppositional nature of *mother* and *professional* roles, women can select behaviors that bring the ought

and ideal selves into better alignment with the actual self for **one** of these two roles, but not for both. Behaviorally, women do make changes to their work lives in order to accommodate young children, and they are more likely to make these accommodations than men: often decreasing work hours, taking time out of the paid work force, and at times foregoing promotions or opportunities that require longer work days or travel (Parker, 2015a). Women report believing that these adjustments adversely affect their careers, and indeed these behaviors result in further separation between the genders in career paths. Alternatively, women who forgo having children can more easily bring their ought and ideal selves better in line with their actual professional selves, thereby decreasing social comparison discrepancies, and increasing self-esteem in this particular domain. This of course produces gender inequalities with respect to family formation. Men do not experience the same psychological conflict in their social comparisons of actual, ideal, and ought selves as prescribed by cultural scripts because men, fatherhood, and professional are not defined in opposition to one another. Men can simultaneously fulfill their role as a good father and their role as a successful professional, maintaining their inclusionary status within both (although men whose approach to fatherhood diverges from the cultural script – such as stay-at-home dads or dads who take several months of paternity leave – likely experience internal conflict due to deviating from social norms). These dynamics are particularly problematic because they occur at a time when young people are just developing their sense of self in both of these roles. Once a clear identity is established as, for example, a competent professional, or a capable mother, it is easier to meet conflicting demands and not experience those as threats to one's identity. But the oppositional demands prescribed by cultural scripts are particularly salient at exactly the time period when young people are establishing these identities and trying to feel efficacious about themselves in these roles.

Importantly, individuals should feel comfortable and be able to make choices around whether and how much to work, or whether to have children, based on what they believe is right for themselves. That is, we are most definitely not saying there is only one "right" way to manage these roles, and it is to have both. Rather our argument is that it is unacceptable to have these "choices" forced upon women because of societal definitions, expectations, and organizational structures that quite literally make it impossible to feel that one is simultaneously succeeding in these highly salient and central roles. In that

case, decisions to scale back on work or to forgo a family are not "choices" that individual women make, but rather the consequences of situational factors and of larger societal structures that result in inequality. Participation by women in their careers and families is fundamentally affected by their sense of place in their social worlds, which, in turn, is driven by self-evaluations that are squarely situated within a particular social context. Framing these processes as individual level phenomena resulting from "personal choice" mischaracterizes the forces operating on these young people. The notion that inequality can be eliminated by women simply making different choices or "trying harder" places blame for impossibly conflicting identities on the shoulders of individual women when, in fact, it is the larger social context, including cultural scripts, that require change. We suggest several paths that would help reduce the psychological conflict women experience in their sense of self, and the ensuing behavioral responses that contribute to gender inequality. One is to increase the strength of the psychological tie between the social role *father* and the social category *men*, which, as we will describe below, both decreases differences in trait stereotypes of dads and men and promotes a more positive characterization of men. A second is to promote change in the cultural scripts associated with the roles of mother, father, and professional, specifically through changing behavioral expectations associated with those roles, which, in turn, should lead to change in trait stereotypes.

In the remainder of this chapter, we describe work from our lab exploring the schematic in Figure 1. The first section explores the mental representations of these social roles by perceivers as they think about and make judgments of others, as well as in the self-representations of young women and men as they consider their sense of self (roughly the top half of Figure 1). The studies describe the strength of connectivity between the various roles both in terms of abstract category associations (e.g., a woman is a mom), and in terms of the trait content of the roles. Consistent with Figure 1, the findings indicate that the role *mom* is more tightly connected to the category women than the role *dad* is to men, and moreover, that *dad* is more congruent with *professional* than is *mom*. Figure 1 highlights the centrality and importance of the role *mom* in own and others' perceptions of women. To this end, we present evidence that the category *mothers* is viewed as having more essentialist properties than the category

fathers, and that this difference is due, in part, to the visually salient physical changes women undergo in the process of becoming mothers.

In the second section, we explore consequences of the identity representation described in Section 1 (roughly the bottom half of Figure 1). We begin by presenting evidence of consequences in social perceivers' judgments of others. Specifically, perceivers expect that childcare related behaviors and responsibilities for women remain more constant relative to those for men, regardless of women's work commitments. Perceivers who hold stronger implicit work-family stereotypes judge that when there is a conflict between work and family (e.g., a sick child and an important work presentation), women should resolve this conflict by prioritizing family, whereas men should resolve it by prioritizing work. Finally, as the mother-father difference in essentialism ratings increases, so too does a perceiver's belief that a woman will struggle to succeed as a mom and as a professional at the same time, whereas the essentialism difference has no bearing on judgments of a dad's ability to do both. Next, we explore consequences for the self. Young women currently training for professional careers anticipate greater conflict in managing work and family than their male counterparts, and higher levels of anticipated role conflict predicts a variety of negative outcomes on measures of health and well-being. In addition, consistent with the metaphor of wearing different hats in different roles, in response to thinking about their goals in the professional and family domains, young women demonstrate a pattern of identity shifting in their implicit self-associations, whereby they strongly activate their association of self to the just primed domain, and less strongly their sense of self in the alternate domain. In contrast, men demonstrate a more stable identity activation regardless of the priming exercise. Finally, these young women express intended behavioral consequences in response to managing work and family conflict. Prior to having children, and while in the midst of training for professional careers, these young women already anticipate making greater accommodations to their work lives due to the presence of young children than do the men. In a final section on consequences, we note that the strong association between the role *mom* and the category women (and the parallel trait characterizations of the two) may contribute to judgments that women are a poor fit to one particular male-stereotypic and male-dominated career role, the category scientists.

Finally, in the last section, we suggest several means for bringing about greater balance in the identity representations of women and men as depicted in Figure 1. The first is to increase the strength of the tie between *dad* and men. We present one line of research aimed at decreasing the mother-father difference in perceived essentialism by describing physical or biological changes that men experience in the course of becoming fathers, making fathers a more real and meaningful category. The second increases the tie between the role *father* and the category men by having participants read about current trends concerning the American father prior to rating what men as a group are like. This manipulation not only resulted in trait perceptions of men that more nearly mirrored those of dads, it also led to more positive trait perceptions of what men as a group are like. Our second suggestion for bringing better balance to the self-aspect representation of men and women is to change the content of the social roles through changing the behavior associated with those roles. Importantly, this change is at least as critical for the worker role as for the parent roles. By creating greater balance in the identity representations depicted in Figure 1, we suggest there will be greater parity in the resulting psychological and behavioral responses by men and women to managing work and family roles, which, in turn, will produce greater equality in work and family outcomes.

Cultural Scripts and Identity Representation

The Social Role *Mom* is More Tightly Connected to Women than the Role *Dad* is to Men

The schematic in Figure 1 suggests that with respect to one's sense of self, the social role of *mom* is more tightly connected to one's identity as a woman than the role of *dad* is to one's identity as a man. This is indicated both by the greater congruence between these identities, and by the stronger self-definition with respect to one's identity as a parent for women relative to men. We have examined this hypothesis using both implicit association measures that assess the strength of mental associations between pairs of categories, and through overlap in the trait content and strength of behavioral associations between the categories.

Implicit Category Associations. Using a Go/No-Go Task (GNAT, Nosek & Banaji, 2001), Park, Smith, and Correll (2010, Study 1) measured the strength of association between gender categories and parenting roles. Specifically, respondents were presented with words that came from one of six

categories: mom words (e.g., *mom, mother, momma*), dad words (e.g., *dad, father, daddy*), female names (e.g., *Sarah, Laura, Julia*), male names (e.g., *Jason, David, Brian*), and two distractor categories (names of birds and surnames). Their task was to attend to two focal categories as 100 stimuli from these six categories appeared. They were instructed to press the spacebar very quickly (within half a second) when a stimulus from one of the two focal categories appeared, and otherwise, to make no response. On one block of trials, participants were instructed to scan for items that were either a *mom* word or a female name, and on another block, *dad* words or a male name. The ease of performing this task indicates the strength of association between the two categories – that is, how easy or difficult it is to simultaneously keep in mind *mom* words and female names versus *dad* words and male names, and to separate these from the background categories. As the two left bars in Figure 2 show, d' (Signal Detection Theory, Green & Swets, 1966) was significantly greater in the mom words + female names block than in the dad words + male names block. That is, it was easier for participants to search for and flag words for mom and female names than words for dad and male names, supporting the argument that the social role *mom* is more tightly associated with the category women than the role of *dad* is with men. Importantly, this effect was significant for both women and men participants. A second set of GNAT blocks tested the hypothesis using images associated with parenting and parenting behaviors (stroller, tricycle, lunchbox, plastic plate and sippy cup, sand bucket and shovel) rather than words representing the social roles of mom and dad. Again, in one block, participants searched for and responded to female names or parent images, and in a second, male names or parent images. The right bars in Figure 2 show the same pattern in which images associated with parenting and parenting behaviors were more strongly associated with the category women than they were with men. This effect did not depend on participant gender.

Insert Figure 2 about here

These results reflect general cultural scripts around the strength of association of parent roles with the gender categories; a second line of studies examined this question from the perspective of the self. Do young women more strongly associate the parent role with self, relative to young men? Using a

similar paradigm with a GNAT, participants in these studies searched for parent images (in this case, baby related images: baby bottle, crib, mobile, pacifier, infant car seat) or for words that indicate the self (me words: *me, myself, I, mine*). Data were collected from two samples. The first was a large group of women and men currently enrolled in advanced degree programs in the business school (MBA), law school (JD), medical school (MD), engineering school (either MS or PhD), or a PhD program in a natural science department (total *N* = 574 students, 278 women and 296 men; Park, Hodges, & McPherson, 2018). The second sample was a group of undergraduate students recruited through the Psychology Department subject pool (total *N* = 96, 46 women and 50 men; Park & Hodges, 2009). As seen in left panel of Figure 3, in both samples, women demonstrated significantly stronger associations between self and parent images than did men. Students completed a parallel GNAT again focused on me related words, but in this block, along with images associated with the professional world (laptop, briefcase, executive chair, executive desk, handheld electronic device). In this case, no differences emerged between women and men in the strength of self to professional images (see the right side of Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3 about here

Consistent with the argument depicted in the schematic in Figure 1 that cultural scripts align the social role of parenting more strongly with women than with men, when participants thought about the social category *women*, the social role of *mom* came easily to mind, as did images associated with parenting young children. When they thought about *men*, they were less likely to bring the social role *dad* to mind, and less likely to associate men with parent related images. This is the larger social context in which women and men exist, and we argue it produces a sense of greater congruence for women between their identity as a mom and their identity as a woman, relative to that for men between their identity as a dad and a man. Indeed, among young men and women, when they think about the self and parent related images, this association is stronger for women, as reflected by better performance on an implicit association task, than it is for men. In contrast, both undergraduate and graduate men and women demonstrate equivalently strong associations between the self and professional related images.

Thus, in Figure 1, the salience and centrality of their identities as a mom is stronger for women than the identity of dad is for men, but at the same time, women and men's professional identities are equivalent in strength. The congruency, or implied alignment between the social role *mom* with the category *women* is greater than the role of *dad* is with *men*. To be clear, it isn't that men don't identify as dads, but this identity simply is not as central to their sense of self as the role of mom is for women.

      Overlap in Trait Content. In addition to the studies just described that examine implicit category associations, we have also explored cultural scripts surrounding the content of social categories (Park & Banchefsky, 2018, Study 1). Specifically, we hypothesized that to the extent the social role *mom* is tightly connected to the category *women*, then when asked to reflect on the trait attributes of these groups, there should be greater overlap in the trait profile of *moms* and *women* than *dads* and *men*. That is, *moms* and *women* should be seen as possessing and not possessing mostly the same traits, whereas *dads* and *men* are likely seen as sharing some traits in common but not nearly to the same extent. To test this hypothesis, we compiled 145 traits selected for their prominence in the literature in describing stereotypes of men and women, and dads and moms. Both positive and negative traits were intentionally included in the set. Groups of participants were asked to rate the degree to which each of these traits characterize just one of the four groups (men, women, moms, or dads), and the average rating for each trait across participants who rated each group constituted the trait profile of that group. These trait profiles were then correlated across traits, between groups. As predicted, the average ratings of the traits for women correlated .87 with those of moms. For men and dads, the value was .56, which, while still very strong, was significantly weaker than the overlap for women and moms. This pattern of stronger overlap in the trait profiles for women and moms than men and dads held across gender groups (although it was only marginally significant for male respondents), those who were and who were not parents, conservatives and liberals, and among different age groups. Interestingly, dads were rated as at least as similar to moms (.83) and women (.63) as they were to men. Thus, when men are in their social role as dads, they are viewed as sharing a great deal in common with moms and women, at least as much as they share with men. Men, in contrast, were rated as quite distinct from both women and moms (.18 with both).

Also of note, and something to which we will return later in the section on leveraging social role change, the trait profile of men was distinctly more negative than that of the other three groups. The traits men were seen as possessing (rated above the scale midpoint as characterizing men) were more negative in valence on average than those rated as characteristic of the other three groups, and the traits they were viewed to lack (rated below the scale midpoint) were more positive in valence than the traits lacked by the other three groups. Indeed, although there were relatively few traits that were rated as distinctly characterizing just one group and no others, there was a substantial cluster (n = 21) of such traits for men, and the majority of them were negative in tone (e.g., aggressive, arrogant, boastful, egotistical, greedy, pushy, reckless, selfish, shallow, vain). In sum, an assessment of the trait attributes seen as characteristic of these four groups suggests that women are seen as nearly synonymous with moms, whereas that simply is not the case for men in their role as dads. Thus, the strong alignment of mom with women identities depicted in Figure 1 emerges not only in the strength of abstract category associations, but in the trait content of the group profiles as well.

The Social Roles of *Dad* and *Professional* are more Congruent than *Mom* and *Professional*

We have argued to this point that cultural scripts shape greater conflict for women, in part, because the social role of *mom* is more tightly connected to the category women than *dad* is to men. That is, men are less likely to be defined by their role as dads, and the role *dad* is less salient and central in men's self-hierarchy; consequently, *dad* is less likely to compete in terms of prominence in the self-concept of men. In addition to this differential strength of parent roles to the self-concept of men and women, it is also the case that cultural scripts surrounding *dad* are better aligned with those defining *professional*, such that even if men bring to mind their role as *dad*, it is less likely to generate conflict with their sense of self-as-professional. Again, we have examined this hypothesis using both implicit associations of the categories and overlap in the trait content.

Implicit Category Associations. Park et al. (2010, Study 1) included GNAT blocks to measure the strength of association between the social role *dad* and the role of *professional*, and the strength of association between *mom* and *professional*. As with the GNAT blocks described above, participants were instructed to scan for and respond to items from one of two categories, and to make no response to

items from the remaining categories. On one block of trials, they responded to *dad* words and the same

professional images described earlier, and in a second block, to *mom* words and professional images.

Performance on these two blocks is presented in Figure 4 (left bars) and demonstrates that the social role

of *dad* is indeed more easily and strongly associated with images depicting the professional world than is

the social role of *mom*. Thus, when participants activated the role of *dad*, images associated with

professional also tended to come to mind, much more so than when thinking about the role of *mom*. For

completeness, two parallel GNAT blocks assessed the strength of association between *mom* versus *dad*

with parent related images (see the right bars in Figure 4). Parent related images were more strongly

associated with the role of *mom* than they were with *dad*. It is interesting that although what makes

someone a dad is that they are a parent, dad related words were actually more strongly associated with

professional images (e.g., a briefcase) than they were with parent images (e.g., a tricycle). Importantly,

the effects depicted in Figure 4 were significant for both men and women participants.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Overlap in Trait Content. Hodges and Park (2013, Study 1) examined rating of *professionals* as a

group on the same traits described earlier (Park & Banchefsky, 2018), and examined overlap in these with

ratings of *dads* and *moms* (all of these ratings were collected at the same timepoint but reported in

different papers based on the focus of the research question). Correlations of the mean trait ratings

indicated that, consistent with the implicit measure, the trait profile of *professionals* correlated more

highly with that of *dads* (.71) than it did with *moms* (.59), and this difference was particularly marked

when examining positive traits only (.49 for *dads* and *professionals*; .12 for *moms* and *professionals*).

These effects were significant for both men and women participants. Table 1 depicts the 25 positive traits

rated as most characteristic of each group. In the far-left column are those present in the trait profiles of

all three groups. The middle column contains the sizeable number of traits present in the 25 positive

traits most descriptive for both *professionals* and *dads*, but not for *moms*. The right-most column

contains the lone trait (*attentive*) in the top 25 positive traits rated as descriptive of *professionals* and

moms, but not of *dads.* In sum, the social role *dad* is more tightly connected to the role of *professional* than is the social role *mom*, both in terms of category-level associations and in terms of the actual trait content of the roles. Thus, when men do activate their identity as a father, this is more congruent with their identity as a professional than is the case for women when thinking of their identity as a mother.

Insert Table 1 about here

Moms as a Category are Perceived as Having More Essentialist Properties than *Dads*

Essentialism is the tendency to view entities as if they have an underlying, often invisible essence that makes them what they are (Medin & Ortony, 1989). There is something about a cat that makes it a cat, and although we might not be able to articulate exactly what that thing is, we believe it is there, that there is an underlying essence of the category cat, and a dog cannot be a cat. Although the earliest work on essentialism focused on beliefs about natural categories, it quickly became apparent that social groups are often perceived in essentialist terms, particularly when there is some biological basis to the group membership (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Gelman & Taylor, 2000; Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Heine, Dar-Nimrod, Cheung, & Proulx, 2017; Hirschfeld, 1996; Keller, 2005; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992). When a group is seen as high in essentialist properties, the group is seen as real, as meaningful, as likely to persist into the future, and as consequential for group members. Essentialist perceptions affect social judgments in both positive and negative ways. For example, thinking about sexual orientation in an essentialist fashion leads to more positive attitudes towards those whose sexual orientation is gay (Haslam &Levy, 2006). It also results in more sympathetic attitudes towards those who struggle with mental illness (a positive consequence), but at the same time results in perceptions that such struggles are fixed and cannot be overcome (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011).

Of particular importance to the argument here, when a group is viewed in highly essentialist terms, explanations for the group's behaviors prioritize properties underlying essentialist perceptions, such as genetic and biological factors, and minimize other possible explanations, such as the environment or experience (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011). Although biological differences may contribute to observed

differences in group behavior, when groups are essentialized, such biological factors are accentuated to

the exclusion of more social factors. Thus, to the extent that the category *mothers* is viewed as high in

essentialist properties, this may promote attributions that gender inequality in work and family outcomes

is driven by the "nature" of motherhood, that this is simply the way mothers are, and that such

differences drive the "choices" women "naturally" make in the course of becoming mothers. That is,

essentializing the category *mother* leads to biological attributions for women taking on primary

responsibility for childcare duties and making accommodations to their careers, to the exclusion of more

social factors. Returning to Figure 1, cultural messages that suggest *mothers* form a special and unique

category will affect women's self-evaluations as they consider their role as a mother and as a

professional.

    To test whether, in fact, mothers as a social category are viewed as having more essentialist

properties, we identified six dimensions or aspects of essentialism examined in previous research. The

dimensions were the strength of category boundaries (both between group distinctiveness and within

group homogeneity, i.e., a meta-contrast ratio, Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987);

permeability of group boundaries, or the ease with which group members can join versus leave the

group; inductive potential, or the degree to which inferences can be made about someone who is in the

group; the degree to which the group is perceived as natural versus as a social construction; how much

group members pursue common goals and share a common fate ; and the persistence or stability of

group characteristics over time. We developed two items to measure each of these six dimensions, and

then formulated one version of each item that asked about *mothers* and one that asked about *fathers*

(Park, Banchefsky, & Reynolds, 2015). For example, the low permeability item for *fathers* stated, "Once a

man is a father, he'll always be a father—it is impossible to leave that behind." The high common goals

item stated, "The things that are important to women who are mothers seem to be very similar for all

mothers." We asked 241 participants to rate their degree of agreement with each item. Consistent with

the hypothesis that mothers would be rated as higher in these essentialist properties than fathers, for all

six dimensions, agreement with the mother version was significantly greater than for the father version

(Park et al., 2015, Study 1). Rated essentialism, on average across all items, was also significantly greater

for mothers than fathers (see Figure 5, leftmost bars), and this was true for both men and women

participants.

Insert Figure 5 about here

Previous research has demonstrated that gender is one of the most highly essentialized of all

social categories (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Haslam et al., 2000). We wondered whether the mother-

father difference we observed might be due to a tendency to see *women* as particularly high in

essentialist properties, more so than *men*. Although we believed the difference had more to do with

special properties perceivers seem to associate with the category *moms*, it was important to test whether

women's gender group membership was seen as more meaningful, diagnostic, and unchangeable than

men's. To examine this, a new sample of 100 participants reported their degree of endorsement of the

same essentialism items changed only to ask about gender groups. That is, each item was revised to

reflect a statement about men as a group or women as a group rather than fathers and mothers. The

findings indicated that the observed initial mother-father difference was not due to a parallel difference

in how women and men are viewed (see the middle two bars in Figure 5). Indeed, *men* as a group were

rated as higher in essentialist properties than *women*, although the magnitude of this effect was

considerably smaller than that between mothers and fathers and fluctuated across the six different

dimensions (Park et al., 2015, Study 2). These findings did not depend on participant gender.

Convinced that differences in perceived essentialism for mothers and fathers was not due simply

to differences in how women and men are viewed, we wanted to understand more about what was

behind the tendency to view moms as having more essentialist properties than dads. In part, we believed

the difference was driven by awareness of the fact that, in our society, women's lives are shaped and

changed more by the presence of children than men's. That is, perceivers see the enormous changes

brought to women's lives when they have children (driven in part by cultural scripts), and so a reasonable

inference is that joining the ranks of *moms* must reflect entry into a very real, meaningful, and deep

group in order for it to effect so much change. But we suspected that the power of biological factors –

knowing that women are physiologically capable of bearing children, whereas men are not – also

contributes to the difference. However, strictly speaking, it requires the biological make up of both men

and women in order to produce a child. It thus seems unlikely that it is simply biological or genetic

factors, per se, that drive differences in essentialist perceptions of moms and dads. We were interested in

one additional difference in how the genders experience procreating. Specifically, in the case of biological

children, women undergo highly salient and visible physical changes in the course of pregnancy. This

physical transformation may signal to perceivers that some real, deep, and meaningful change is taking

place within this mom-to-be. Because men do not experience similar observable physical changes, it may

seem they are less affected by their status as a father-to-be. Rothbart and Taylor (1992; see also Medin,

1989) suggested that category differences that are correlated with physical differences are particularly

and disproportionately likely to be viewed as having a "natural kind" structure and, consequently, as high

in essentialism. If this is the case – if the physical transformation women undergo in the process of

generating a biological child cues perceivers that women are now part of a lasting and meaningful group

– then the mother-father difference in perceived essentialism should be greatly reduced for adoptive

parents. Here, perceivers still witness the profound change a child brings to a woman's life in our culture,

and this should contribute to some level of perceived differences between mothers and fathers. But for

adoptive parents, the mother does not undergo the same physical changes as in the case of biological

children. To examine whether the mother-father difference would be smaller for adoptive parents, a

sample of 199 participants rated the same essentialism items, but in this case adapted for adoptive

parents (e.g., "If I learn that a woman is an adoptive mother, I will know a lot about what her life is like.").

The rightmost bars in Figure 5 depict the mean ratings for adoptive parents. Mothers were still rated as

significantly higher in essentialism than fathers, but the magnitude of this effect was greatly reduced (and

was significantly smaller than a companion sample collected in the same study and randomly assigned to

rate biological parents; Park et al., 2015, Study 5). None of these effects depended on participant gender.

It seems, then, that the salient physical changes women experience in the process of becoming

mothers contribute to the psychological perception that they now have joined a deeply meaningful and

enduring category. Still, there are many other differences between biological and adoptive mothers. The

strongest test of this hypothesis would be an experimental manipulation in which participants learn about beings who in the course of producing offspring do or do not undergo a physical transformation. To this end, we constructed materials that described the reproductive process in an alien species, the Naloneons, presented to participants in a series of storyboard images. In the Physical Change condition, after the egg was fertilized, the mother-analogue (dubbed the "Nester") underwent a series of changes in color; both parents began as neon green but the Nester gradually transformed to bright purple. The final slide depicted the parents with the new baby Naloneon who, like the father-analogue (dubbed the "Duster"), was neon green while the mother-analogue was bright purple. In the No Physical Change condition, the egg was laid in a nest that was not attached to either parent. This nest underwent the same color changes as in the Physical Change condition, but the Nester remained unchanged. Both the Nester and the Duster were then rated on the same essentialism items used in the previous studies. Of note, participants also learned either that the basis for assignment to the roles of Nester and Duster was randomly determined by a computer algorithm or that it was genetically determined from birth. This role assignment manipulation had no effects on essentialism ratings. However, the predicted effects were observed for the Physical Change variable. As seen in Figure 6, when the Nesters went through salient physical changes in the course of producing offspring, they were rated as significantly higher in essentialist properties than the Duster. But when the Nester remained visually unchanged, the Nesters and Dusters were rated exactly the same (Park et al., 2015, Study 3). Again, none of these effects depended on participants' gender. Thus, observing the physical transformation of the Nester resulted in perceptions that Nesters form a more deep, real, and meaningful category.

Insert Figure 6 about here

In order to assess the generality of the tendency to perceive mothers as higher in essentialism than fathers, we aggregated the mother-father essentialism difference from the 815 responses across all participants in these studies and examined whether the magnitude of the effect was predicted by various demographic variables. Although average essentialism ratings (across mothers and fathers) were higher

among political conservatives and among those who were themselves parents, the *difference* in ratings for mothers relative to fathers did not depend on gender, age, political conservatism, or parental status (whether biological, adoptive, or a step-parent). Education was marginally related (*p* = .10), such that the rated mother-father difference was somewhat larger for those with more education, but given the large sample size, this effect should be cautiously considered. The striking takeaway point from this supplementary analysis is just how robust and widespread is the perception that mothers as a group have more essentialist properties than fathers.

Summary

We have argued in this first section that cultural scripts contribute to the construction of identities in decidedly different ways for young women and young men. For women, both in the perceptions of others and in their self-perceptions, their identities as *mom* are more centrally and saliently linked to their sense of self, and to their very sense of being a woman, than is the case for *dad* and men. Moreover, when men do activate their identities as *dad*, this is more congruent with the role of *professional* than it is for *mom*, and hence they should experience less identity conflict in psychologically managing these two aspects of the self. To the extent that cultural conceptions of the ideal mom share little in common with, and indeed to a large extent actually conflict with, our conceptions of the ideal professional, this creates a conundrum for women. Going back to Sociometer Theory, when a woman who is both a mother and a professional engages in social comparison to evaluate how she is doing, she will necessarily struggle to simultaneously feel good about herself in both groups. Women experience these two identities in opposition to one another in a way that is not true of men. Note that this is particularly likely to be the case among high achieving, career-oriented women, who are used to working hard and to receiving feedback that they are doing a great job throughout their lives. But suddenly, at this juncture when self-as-professional collides with self-as-parent, it is extremely difficult for these women to feel they are succeeding at both. For men, precisely because the content of the cultural script for Dad shares much more in common with that of the ideal professional, behaving in a manner that fulfills expectations in one domain simultaneously fulfills expectations in the other.

Consequences of Cultural Scripts and Conflicting Identities

In this next section, we present evidence concerning the consequences of cultural scripts regarding parenting roles, professional roles, and the genders, and the conflict they generate in navigating identities and in identity construction. Specifically, we first consider evidence that cultural scripts affect prescriptive and evaluative judgments others make of women and men. Next, we present evidence that cultural scripts are related to expectations regarding conflict for the self, that women who anticipate high conflict shift between activating self-associations in parent and professional roles, whereas men retain a more stable identity across domains, and that conflicting roles are related to intentions by women to make greater accommodations to work hours that contribute to inequitable outcomes for the genders. Finally, we explore broader consequences that the strong link between women and the social role *mom* may have for judgments regarding occupational suitability, such as the fit of women in science.

Consequences in the Judgments of Others

Women are Expected to Do It All. Park, Smith, and Correll (2008) were interested in how trait judgments and behavioral expectations of women and men shift as a function of their status as parents and the number of hours spent per week in paid work. Each participant read about just one target who was described as married, with two children ages 8 and 5. Across participants, the number of hours spent in paid work (20, 40, or 60 hours/week), as well as the protagonist's gender (female name versus male name), varied. Participants were asked to make three types of ratings of the protagonist: (1) subjective trait ratings on warmth (warm, nurturing, good natured, sincere) and competence (competent, capable, skillful, efficient), (2) objective behavioral ratings related to warmth (e.g., "If one of Peter's children gets hurt, how often would they come to Peter for comfort?") and competence ("If Peter's boss needs someone to lead an important project, how often would Peter be asked?"), and (3) a global assessment of childcare and professional responsibilities. For all of the warmth trait ratings and competence related judgments, responses were not affected by the gender of the protagonist, but rather only by number of hours worked. For objective behavioral ratings related to warmth and overall childcare responsibilities, both hours worked and protagonist gender mattered. At every number of hours worked, women were still expected to perform a greater number of warmth related behaviors than men, and this effect did not

depend on participant gender. For overall childcare responsibilities, estimates for women were less affected by number of hours worked than for men, such that expected childcare responsibilities remained more constant for women regardless of hours worked. Thus, women were expected to engage in more warmth related behaviors regardless of hours worked, and their childcare duties were anticipated to be adjusted less due to hours worked than was the case for men with equivalent work schedules.

Women are expected to Prioritize Family, Men to Prioritize Work. In a second study in Park et al. (2010), we examined downstream consequences of individual differences in the strength of implicit associations between the genders and parenting and career roles on judgments of how the genders should prioritize work and family obligations. Using an implicit measure based on Payne's (2001) Weapon Identification Task, participants categorized images as belonging to either the home realm (e.g., baby bottle) or the work realm (e.g., executive desk). Each image was preceded by either a male or female face, and participants were instructed to make no response to the faces. This task, like the GNAT described earlier, demonstrated robust implicit stereotypes whereby categorization of parent images was significantly faster (and more accurate) when primed by a female than male face, and categorization of career images was faster (and more accurate) when primed by a male than female face. Response times were used to calculate an individual difference measure reflecting how much longer it took to categorize objects when they were primed by a gender counter-stereotypic relative to gender stereotypic face ([RT to parent images primed by male faces + RT to career images primed by female faces] minus [RT to parent images primed by female faces + RT to career images primed by male faces]). That is, larger scores reflected stronger implicit stereotypic role associations. In a second part of the study, participants were asked to read four different conflict scenarios and to rate the suitability of each of several options to solving the conflict. Two of these conflicts involved work and family, and the other two were fillers. For example, in one scenario, the protagonist was scheduled to make an important presentation to the Board of Directors when the elementary school called to say a sick child needed to be picked up. Participants were asked to rate how good a choice each of four possible solutions would be, two that prioritized family (reschedule the presentation; ask a coworker to make the presentation) and two that prioritized work (have the child wait an hour in the sickroom until the presentation was over; ask a colleague to pick

up the child). Scores on the implicit bias measure predicted which solutions were seen as best as a function of gender of the protagonist in the scenario. Specifically, when the protagonist was a woman, as implicit bias increased, so, too, did a preference for the solutions that prioritized family over work. When the protagonist was a man, the inverse relationship emerged, such that, as implicit bias increased, so, too, did judgments that the optimal solution was to prioritize work over family. These effects did not depend on participant gender.

Essentialism Differences Predict Greater Judged Difficulty of Women Succeeding as Both a Mother and a Professional. Finally, in our work on essentialist perceptions of mothers and fathers, we asked participants to judge how easy or difficult it is for women to simultaneously be successful as both a mother and a professional, and how easy or difficult it is for men to simultaneously succeed in both roles. We anticipated that to the extent *moms* are viewed as a highly essentialized category, more so than *dads*, this would result in perceptions that it is a struggle for women to simultaneously succeed in both roles. Viewing the category *mothers* as having a deep and meaningful essence suggests that it will be hard for them to succeed in such an important and revered role while at the same time succeeding as a professional. The findings revealed exactly this pattern of responses. As individual differences on the mother-father difference in essentialist perceptions increased, so too did the judged difficulty of women to simultaneously succeed in both roles. The ability of men to succeed in both roles was unrelated to differences in essentialist perceptions of mothers and fathers. Neither of these effects depended on participant gender.

These three studies demonstrate that cultural scripts associating women with parenting more strongly than men, and a more essentialized view of *mothers* relative to *fathers*, predict consequential judgments that others make. It is expected that women will engage in more warmth and caregiving behaviors than men regardless of their work demands. Individual differences in the strength of cultural scripts predicted judgments that the best way to solve work-family conflicts is for women to prioritize family over work, and for men to prioritize work over family. Individual differences in the mother-father difference in perceived essentialism predicted perceptions that women will struggle to simultaneously succeed in their roles as a *mom* and a *professional*, whereas the same was not true of men. Importantly,

the latter two effects are both correlational in nature and as such, the direction of causation is unknown. It may be that strong cultural scripts drive stereotypical judgments of how others ought to or likely will behave, but it may also be that expecting or observing stereotypical behavior on the part of others (that mothers prioritize family or struggle to meet work and family expectations) drives the strong cultural scripts. Of course, both directions of influence could, and in all likelihood probably do, occur.

Consequences for the Self

Heightened Expected Role Conflict for Women. In describing the data in Figure 3, we noted the particularly strong link both undergraduate and graduate women students perceive between the social role *mom* and their selves, a link that was stronger than that demonstrated by men students between *dad* and their selves. At the same time, these young women students demonstrated career identities that were equal in strength to the men in the samples. Returning to the schematic in Figure 1, these women demonstrated as strong career identities and stronger parent identities as the men; they were also immersed in a social context that connected parenting more strongly with women, and that depicted the role of mother and professional as incongruent. This set of conditions forms the basis for a perfect storm, whereby young women anticipate and worry about high levels of conflict for themselves as they navigate their roles as professional and parent. In the large study of graduate and professional students, we asked participants about anticipated role conflict using two items (Park et al., 2018). The first asked them to rate how easy or difficult they anticipated it would be for them to manage having both a career and a family. For the second, they were asked to think about their ideal selves as a parent and in their career, and to rate how congruent or incongruent these two selves were. Women students reported significantly higher levels of anticipated role-conflict relative to the men (*M* = 4.78 for women and 4.04 for men, averaging across these two items). Of note, the vast majority of these students reported wanting to have children (85%), and only a fraction of them had children at the time the research was conducted (8%). For these high-achieving and successful young adults, women already anticipated greater difficulty in managing their identities as a parent and a professional than did the men.

Further, expected role conflict was predictive of a large set of health and well-being outcomes. Specifically, students were asked to report their current levels of state anxiety, depression, and perceived

stress in both their home and school lives, as well as self-efficacy to manage work and family conflict, self-esteem, and life-satisfaction (in general, with their career, with their current parental status, in their relationship, and with other aspects of their personal life). Initial analyses revealed gender differences on 8 of the 11 variables, and in all cases, women reported worse health and well-being outcomes than men (see Table 2). A subsequent analysis included, among other predictors, expected role-conflict along with gender and their interaction. As shown in the right two columns of Table 2, expected role-conflict was a significant predictor of all 11 variables, always in the direction of higher anticipated conflict predicting worse health and well-being outcomes. Moreover, once role-conflict was included in the models, the initially identified gender differences became nonsignificant for all but one outcome measure (women still reported less satisfaction with their parent status, which was not currently a parent for the vast majority of students). That is, expected role-conflict appeared to operate as the more proximal variable predicting more negative psychological health outcomes. Women anticipated high levels of conflict in their roles as parent and professional, and high conflict was related to poorer health and well-being outcomes.

Insert Table 2 about here

Women Experience Shifting Identities, Men Experience Stable Identities. One response to the conflicting roles of *mom* and *professional* might be to treat these as competing identities that tradeoff against one another. Whereas men might comfortably maintain a stable sense of self as both *father* and *professional*, for women, they may adopt the mental strategy of considering themselves alternately as *mother* **or** *professional*. That is, women may experience a sense of shifting identities wherein they wear either their mom or their professional hat, but they do not wear both simultaneously. Evidence that women tend to shift identities whereas men maintain a more singular stable identity was present in two distinct sets of measures in the data from graduate and professional school students (Park et al., 2018). In addition to the implicit association task depicted in Figure 3, students completed self-report explicit measures of strength of identification with plans to be a parent and plans to have a career. One index of

shifting is the tendency to report a different pattern of identity strength on the explicit relative to implicit tasks. That is, a participant who on the implicit task demonstrates stronger self-associations in the parent domain, but on the explicit task reports the reverse, is demonstrating a psychological shift in their domain identifications across type of measure. We computed this score, first transforming all dependent variables to z-scores and then calculating the relative strength of association to parent versus professional on the implicit task and subtracting from this the relative strength of self-reported identification with parent versus professional on the explicit task. Consistent with the hypothesis that women are more likely than men to experience shifting identities, the shifting score was significantly greater for women than for men in the sample. Furthermore, we tested whether the magnitude of the shifting score was related to the magnitude of expected role conflict for the self, and indeed it was. Participants who demonstrated the greatest levels of shifting in their relative parent versus professional identities from the implicit to explicit tasks also expected the highest levels of conflict for themselves as they navigated these roles in their lives.

A second measure of identity shifting in this study comes from examining the effect of a priming manipulation on students' self-associations on the GNAT (Park, Hodges, Mellinger, & Correll, in preparation; see also Hodges & Park, 2013). In this task, students were asked first to consider and write about in some detail their goals with respect to being a parent, or with respect to their careers (the order of the priming task was counterbalanced across participants). Following the priming task in a given domain, they completed first the GNAT pairing that matched the just completed prime, followed by the GNAT pairing for the alternative domain. For example, a student might be asked to consider her goals with respect to her career, and to write at some length and in concrete detail about these. She would then complete the me + professional GNAT block, followed by the me + parent GNAT block. Next, she would be asked to consider her goals in the parenting domain and to write at length about these. Finally, she would complete the me + parent GNAT block, followed by the me + professional GNAT block. Of interest is the magnitude of the shift in her self-associations to parent as a function of the priming task. Does she demonstrate a strong me + parent association after thinking about parenting goals, but a much weaker association after considering career goals? This reflects the magnitude of shifting identity for her.

If, in contrast, the strength of her self-association to parent remains relatively unchanged after having just

thought about parent versus career goals, this reflects a more stable self-concept. QUAD model analyses

(Conrey, Sherman, Gawronski, Hugenberg, & Groom, 2005) were used to estimate A, the likelihood that a

given association was activated in each of the four GNAT blocks. We were specifically interested in the

magnitude of A in each domain (activation of parent identity, activation of professional identity) as a

function of whether that was the domain that had just been primed. Figure 7 depicts the results from this

analysis. For women, A was substantially larger for the domain that matched the just primed role – after

thinking about my parent goals, A to me + parent was much greater than after thinking about my career

goals. For men, this difference was not significant. A to me + parent (or the likelihood that the association

between me and parent was activated) was equivalent in magnitude whether this GNAT block followed

the career prime or the parent prime. That is, for men, the likelihood that these self-associations were

activated was relatively unaltered by the priming task. Men appeared to maintain a more stable self-

concept across contexts, whereas women shifted theirs in alignment with the domain in which they had

just been considering their goals. Data from Hodges and Park (2013) also showed evidence of this

differential identity shifting by the genders, but with an undergraduate sample. Although the evidence for

this difference has now been replicated in multiple samples and with different measures, the

consequences of this shifting are less clear. Does it result in a compartmentalized and fragmented sense

of self, or does it help protect the individual from interference across identities? This is a question we

continue to pursue in our research.

Insert Figure 7 about here

Behavioral Responses to Identity Conflict. The students in the graduate and professional school

sample were also asked about their intentions with respect to work hours. The women in the sample

reported anticipating working fewer hours in general than the men, fewer hours when they had young

children (ages 0-6 years), and making greater accommodations to their work schedule due to the

presence of young children than did the men (Park et al., 2018). Reduced work hours due to young

children has been identified as a factor that contributes to gender pay inequities, and the difference it creates persists into future years of work (Goldin, 2014). Consistent with the argument that women's lives are affected more profoundly by the presence and number of children than are those of men, in these data, women's intentions with respect to hours of work were more strongly related to their parent and career identity strengths than was the case for men. When asked about anticipated number of work hours with young children, for women this was predicted by their self-reported parent and career identity strengths (the two made independent contributions in a model that included both, along with expected role-conflict). As parent identity strength increased, intended work hours decreased, whereas as career identity strength increased, intended work hours increased. For men, parent identity was unrelated to intended work hours, and although career identity was (positively) related, the relation was significantly weaker (i.e., career identity strength mattered less) than that for women. Expected role conflict also predicted anticipated work hours with young children but in opposite directions for men and women. Men who expected greater conflict in managing their roles as parent and professional intended to work a *greater* number of hours than those anticipating less conflict. For women, greater anticipated conflict was associated with working fewer hours, although this simple slope by itself was not significant. Importantly, these relations were measured using correlational methodology, and therefore the causal direction cannot be determined. It may be that women and men anticipate making different accommodations as a function of anticipated conflict in managing parent and career roles (with women intending to work fewer and men intending to work more hours), or it may be that the students first consider the accommodations they intend to make and this drives expectations of how much conflict they will experience.

Returning to the dynamics depicted in Figure 1, we suggest that in assessing their sense of self, their place in the world, and their degree of belonging, women's self-evaluations are driven by social comparisons to an ideal set by cultural scripts. The very content of these scripts generates conflict as women evaluate themselves in the career and parent domains. We have at least some evidence that this conflict predicts other adverse psychological outcomes. Women appear to shift back and forth between their identities as *mother* versus *professional*, whereas men maintain a more stable sense of self.

Behaviorally, women anticipate adjusting their work lives more due to the presence of children, and this will, in turn, adversely impact their careers and contribute to the gender pay gap. Importantly, these actions are taken in response to the larger social context in which women find themselves. That is, we suggest they are taken in the service of trying to maintain one's sense of self as a successful and valued group member. By framing this as an individual level decision, it absolves the larger social system from owning its contribution to these events. Moreover, that these dynamics take place in a larger system means that the shared cultural scripts affect not only the behavior of women themselves, but also the behavior of others, such as a work supervisor who decides not to promote a woman to a position that requires travel because (the supervisor infers) she is needed at home.

Broader Consequences for Women in Science

A flurry of recent research has examined the role that stereotypes play in gender gaps in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) participation (Ceci & Williams, 2011; Handelsman et al., 2005; Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012). Gender stereotypes contribute to this gap, both through their effects on perceptions of the careers themselves (that science careers are not perceived as affording communal goals; Diekman, Brown, Johnston, & Clark, 2010), and through a mismatch of stereotypes about what women are like versus what scientists are like (Banchefsky & Park, 2018; Carli, Alawa, Lee, Zhao, & Kim, 2016). In this section, we briefly describe evidence from two lines of research from our lab that speak to the role of gender stereotypes in STEM participation. Our purpose is to highlight just how tightly connected these gender stereotypes are to the role of women as *mom*. Although the research in this area (ours included) typically asks specifically about stereotypes of *women*, it is more proximally the traits associated with the role *mom* that are seen as incongruent with the role of scientist, but because the category *women* is so tightly connected to the social role *mom*, by implication, women are seen as a poor fit to *scientist.* The logic goes something like, women cannot be scientists because women are mothers and mothers are warm and nurturing but scientists are cold and analytical. It is the tight connection between *women* and *mom* embodied in cultural scripts that leads to the bleeding over of *mom* defined attributes to *women* that, in turn, conflicts with participation in science.

One set of studies was designed to identify the trait content of stereotypes of scientists and to then examine the degree of fit of these traits with perceptions of women and men, using both implicit and explicit measures. There is a robust literature using implicit measures that demonstrates stronger associations between men and science than women and science (e.g., Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Nosek et al., 2009). However, all of this work examined category level associations (e.g., pairing women or men with words such as *physics, chemistry, NASA*), whereas we were interested in the trait content of science stereotypes and whether that trait content, per se, was differentially associated with women and men. In the first study, men and women participants were asked to rate 52 traits on the extent to which each describes scientists and early childhood educators (McPherson, Banchefsky, & Park, in preparation). Table 3 contains the full list of traits on which the two groups were viewed as significantly different from one another. Note just how strongly the set of traits on which scientists were viewed as particularly low overlap with trait stereotypes of moms.

Insert Table 3 about here

We selected 5 traits representing each of four dimensions that distinguished perceptions of scientists versus early childhood educators. Specifically, scientists were rated particularly high on scientific related traits (e.g., analytical, logical) and on cold traits (e.g., isolated, robotic). They were rated as particularly low on warmth traits (e.g., caring, compassionate) and unscientific traits (e.g., careless, gullible). The goal of our second study was to examine the fit of these traits – identified to be stereotypic and counter-stereotypic of scientists – to the groups women and men. Participants completed both explicit ratings of the groups (estimating the percentage of the group that has each trait) as well as GNAT blocks pairing all combinations of women and men with these four sets of traits. As Figure 8 reflects, women were seen as significantly lower than men on the scientist stereotypic dimensions, and as significantly higher than men on the scientist counter-stereotypic dimensions, and this was true on both the explicit trait ratings an on d' from the implicit GNAT measure. These effects either did not depend on participant gender, or were significant for both men and women participants, with the exception of one

marginally significant effect. Thus, women were seen to lack the traits associated with scientists, and to possess those seen as counter to stereotypes of scientists. We suggest that the poor fit of women to careers as scientists is driven, in part, by a mismatch between traits seen as central to the role of mom (warm and *not* cold) and scientists (cold and *not* warm), coupled with the tight connection between women as a category and their role as moms.

Insert Figure 8 about here

In another series of studies, we demonstrated that women who were particularly high in facial feminine appearance were judged as unlikely to be scientists, even though these women were in fact in science faculty positions at top research institutions (Banchefsky, Westfall, Park, & Judd, 2016). We suggest that this effect similarly occurs, in part, because the high femininity evokes associations to the role of *mom*, and the traits associated with that role conflict with the trait profile of scientists. These effects did not depend on participant gender.

Summary

In this second section, we have argued that strong cultural scripts pairing women with the social role *mom*, *dad* with the role *professional*, and *mom* as conflicting with *professional* have important consequences. They affect judgments that others make regarding the responsibilities of women and men, the ease with which women and men can succeed in their roles as parent and professional, and how women and men should prioritize work versus family. They affect self-judgments, including anticipated role conflict and managing role conflict through identity shifting (for women) versus identity stability (for men). They affect behavioral outcomes, including intentions to make greater accommodations to work hours due to the presence of young children on the part of women than men. Finally, we suggest that these cultural scripts contribute to the gender gap in science related fields because of the tight connection between the category women and the role of mom, and the poor fit of *mom* traits to perceptions of what a scientist is like. In the third and final section of this chapter, we discuss possible

ways to leverage social roles as a way to change gender stereotypes with the goal of bringing about greater gender equality.

Leveraging Social Role Change to Promote Equality

According to the argument developed in this chapter, in order to decrease the magnitude of perceived conflict around parent and professional identities for women, the cultural scripts behind them need to be changed. But what is the best mechanism to bring about that change? One avenue is to promote change in the social roles of *mom*, *dad*, and *professional*. Changes to the roles should eventually drive changes in the cultural scripts, as these are largely driven by the content of the social roles. We consider two possible points of intervention. Returning to the schematic in Figure 1, one target of change is to alter the strength of the connection between parent roles and gender groups. Specifically, the goal would be to tighten this connection for men and to weaken it to some degree for women, so that parent roles occupy a more equal function in the self-concepts of women and men. A second point of intervention would be to change the content of the roles themselves to bring *mom* and *dad* roles into better alignment, and to promote a definition of the professional role that is less at odds with parenting roles.

Alter the Strength of the Tie Between the Parent Role and the Gender Group

We have conducted a number of studies that examined mechanisms by which the connection of the role of *dad* to the group *men* might be strengthened. The first tested the feasibility of decreasing the gap in perceived essentialism for mothers and fathers. To the extent *dads* are perceived as a deeply meaningful, enduring, and informative category, this should increase the likelihood of activation of the *dad* role in thinking about men, bringing into better balance parent role identity associations for men and women. Their role as *dads* should be more influential in judgments of what men are like. The second examined the goal of increasing overlap in the trait content of the *dad* role and *men*, such that men are perceived in a manner that is more strongly aligned with *dads*.

Decreasing the Mother-Father Difference in Essentialism. In our earlier work on differences in essentialist perceptions of *mothers* and *fathers,* we found evidence that this difference is driven, in part, by the visually salient physical changes women go through in the course of becoming mothers. We

wondered how perceptions of fathers might be altered if they were described as similarly experiencing physical or biological changes. Fathers do, in fact, experience hormonal changes in response to new babies (e.g., an increase in oxytocin levels in response to playing with their babies; Feldman, Gordon, Schneiderman, Weisman, & Zagoory-Sharon, 2010). Bringing such changes to the attention of perceivers might lead them to think about fathers as a category with a more real and meaningful basis – that is, it might result in increased perceptions of essentialism for *dads*. Although this seemed a reasonable hypothesis, such hormonal changes do not generate the sort of visually salient physical changes as with pregnancy. We wanted to examine the effects of a manipulation that would highlight physical changes fathers experience, whether or not those were caused by underlying biological changes. In this study (McPherson, Banchefsky, & Park, 2018, Study 2), participants were asked to read a news article, to tell us about their reactions to it, and to then respond to the same essentialism items used in our earlier research. They were randomly assigned to read one of four newspaper type articles developed for the purposes of the study, although importantly the information in the articles was true and was reasonably something one might read in the popular media. One article described physical changes men go through as part of becoming a dad – specifically, developing a "Dad Bod" (Garfield et al., 2016). Participants learned that fathers weigh about 10 pounds more on average than childless men, and that they often gain this weight several months before their child is born and carry these additional pounds for years. Images accompanied each article manipulation and in the Dad Bod condition, two different men were pictured before and after having a new child with this weight gain easily visible. The article was silent on whether these changes were due to environmental changes (e.g., greater demands on new fathers' time) or to a shift in their physiological make-up. A second article (Bio Dad) described biological changes that men experience in response to becoming a new father, including increases in oxytocin levels, and increased neural activity in the pre-frontal cortex. A third article (Social Dad) described changes in the social landscape of parenting that have affected men's lives. Specifically, it noted that men now spend 2.5 times as many hours with their young children as they did in 1985, and that men report high levels of empathic concern and are motivated to help their child thrive. A fourth article (Bio Mom) was identical to the Bio Dad article but described these changes as occurring to mothers rather than fathers.

The leftmost panel of Figure 9 depicts the mother-father difference in rated essentialism across the four conditions and, for comparison, the difference from the essentialism work described earlier that contained no manipulation (Park et al., 2015, Study 1). Although mothers continued to be rated as higher in essentialist properties on average than fathers in all conditions, that difference was significantly attenuated when dads were described as experiencing some physically visible or biological change. This was indexed by the significant linear effect in the four conditions from McPherson et al. (2018) depicted in the left panel of Figure 9. Pairwise tests indicated that the essentialism difference was significantly reduced in the DadBod relative to SocialDad and BioMom conditions; the BioDad condition fell in between DadBod, SocialDad, and BioMom and did not differ statistically from these. The right panel of Figure 9 depicts differences in ratings separately for mothers and fathers in this study relative to the ratings from Park et al. (2015). Two observations stand out from this figure. One is that changes in essentialism ratings in the DadBod and BioDad conditions occurred primarily in perceptions of fathers, with smaller reductions in perceptions of mothers. That is, highlighting physical or biological changes experienced by fathers reduced the mother-father difference in essentialist perceptions primarily through increasing essentialist perceptions of fathers. Second, the SocialDad manipulation had the interesting effect of decreasing essentialist perceptions for **both** groups, somewhat more so for mothers than fathers. That is, calling attention to cultural shifts in such things as time spent with children by fathers led participants to view both groups less as natural kinds, and more as a product of social construction. This effect corresponds to the content of the manipulation, but is noteworthy in that it speaks to the pliability of perceived essentialist properties associated with these roles. Highlighting how behavioral patterns of mothers and fathers have changed in response to social changes led participants to see both roles as less permanent, natural, stable, and so on, and thus seems promising as a means for altering rigid cultural scripts surrounding these roles. The finding is consistent with other theorizing on the importance of genetic and biological (as opposed to social) explanations in driving strong essentialist perceptions of groups (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Heine et al., 2017). None of these effects depended on participant gender.

Insert Figure 9 about here

Increasing Overlap in the Trait Content of the *Dad* Role and *Men*. As discussed above, Park and Banchefsky (2018, Study 1) found that perceptions of the average trait profiles for women were highly overlapping with those of *moms*, whereas the overlap was much weaker for men and *dads*. In a second study, they tested whether the link between men and dads might be tightened by simply having participants bring to mind *fathers* as a category prior to rating what **men** are like. Participants were told we would be asking about their perceptions of various social groups and that it might help to situate their ratings by first reading about current trends in society. They read through a series of six computer screens containing true facts either about "American Fathers" or "The American Workforce." After reading and responding to this information, they rated *men* as a group on the same 145 traits as in Study 1. Using the average ratings for men and for dads from Study 1, we calculated the degree of overlap in each participant's trait ratings for men from Study 2 with these average trait profiles from Study 1. The average value of these correlations is plotted in Figure 10 and reveals that after thinking about American Fathers, men were rated more similarly to *dads* than after thinking about the American Workforce. At the same time, men were rated as equally similar to the men trait profile from Study 1 regardless of whether participants were thinking about fathers or the workforce. These effects did not depend on participant gender. Thus, asking participants to think about a social role that men engage in – the role of father – resulted in increased overlap in perceptions of men with dads, with no reduction in perceptions of men as men. Of particular note were changes in the traits seen as characteristic of men following the father relative to workforce prime. On average, the traits men were seen as possessing were significantly more positive after thinking about their roles as fathers, and the traits judged as not characteristic of men were significantly more negative in tone. For example, after thinking about their roles as fathers relative to the workforce, men were rated as significantly more attentive, devoted, generous, loyal, and supportive (among other traits), and as less arrogant, boastful, hostile, selfish, and vain.

Insert Figure 10 about here

In a third and final study, we tested whether reminding men of their role as fathers might mitigate punitive judgments in response to a threat to their manhood (Bosson, Vandello, Burnaford, Weaver, & Arzu Wasti, 2009; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). Male participants began by reading an op-ed piece that described the problematic nature of men in our society (lower high school and college completion rates, high rates of incarceration and health related issues), or one that described current debates around driverless cars. Next, they read one of the articles described above regarding American Fathers or the American Workforce. Finally, they rated their opposition versus support for seven policy items that would benefit disadvantaged groups (e.g., more lenient immigration policies, equal pay for women, allowing gays to serve openly in the military). We hypothesized that reading about men as a problem would generate a threat response among these men, resulting in opposition to the benevolent policies. However, reminding them of the important and valued role of *father* in our society might serve to mitigate that threat, resulting in greater support for the benevolent policies relative to men in the threat condition who read simply about the American workforce. This was exactly the pattern of responses observed. In contrast, men who were not threatened (those who read about driverless cars) endorsed the benevolent policies to the same degree whether they read about American fathers or the American workforce.

In sum, this series of studies suggests that the link between men and the social role *dad* can be relatively easily boosted by having either men themselves, or social perceivers more generally, practice thinking about fathers in the context of considering what men are like. In addition, highlighting the fact that men experience deep and meaningful changes in the course of becoming fathers decreases the tendency to essentialize the category mom more so than dad. Although we have not explored this, in principle, weakening the tie of women to *mom* should similarly help balance the self-concepts of men and women. There is research showing that utilizing a counterstereotype intention (e.g., when a masculine trait is presented, think of a female name) decreases the strength of implicitly measured gender stereotypes (Blair & Banaji, 1996). It would be interesting to see whether such a manipulation also decreases the strength of the woman-to-mom association. Additionally, the more the general culture is

exposed to highly visible women in roles other than mom (e.g., as CEOs or prominent political figures),

these roles should provide a counterweight to *mom* such that they, too, are likely to come to mind in

thinking about the group women.

Changing the Content of the Social Roles

A second approach to bringing the genders into greater balance with respect to the congruence

in their roles as parents and professionals is to promote change in the roles themselves. Perhaps most

promising are changes to role expectations for fathers, particularly with regard to what behaviors are

viewed as typical of dads. Building off of work by Diekman and Eagly (2000) on the stability of gender

stereotypes, Banchefsky and Park (2016) asked undergraduate students about their perceptions of the

traits and behaviors performed by mothers and fathers of the past (1950), the present (2009), and the

future (2050). They demonstrated that mothers and fathers were viewed as having become more similar

to one another in their trait attributes and behaviors over the past 50 years, and that they were expected

to continue those trends into the future. These effects were present for both men and women

participants. Of note, and consistent with Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), changes in role related

behaviors (e.g., a greater likelihood now that mothers contribute substantial financial resources to the

family, and that fathers provide comfort to an upset child) mediated changes in trait perceptions. These

findings suggest that to the extent the behavioral expectations of the roles of mother and father become

defined less along stereotypic lines, this will promote changes in trait stereotypes associated with the

roles. Ideally, this would reduce conflict in the content of the trait profile of moms and professionals (and

perhaps increase it slightly for dads and professionals), bringing these into better alignment with one

another.

A second line of evidence that speaks to the importance of changing the content of the social

roles comes from the study of graduate and professional students (Park et al., 2018). Recall that women

students expected much greater levels of conflict in managing their roles as a parent and professional

than did the men, and expected role conflict was associated with a large number of adverse psychological

health and well-being outcomes. We examined a number of possible predictors of expected role conflict.

Of note, women (but not men) who expressed stronger trait stereotypes about what the genders are like

also expected higher role conflict for themselves. In addition, again for women only, if their mother did not work while they were growing up, they anticipated greater role conflict than if their moms did work. These findings suggest that more balanced role stereotypes might help promote a more balanced set of concerns over managing work and family obligations for men and women.

One limitation of this approach to more balanced content in the role expectations for mothers and fathers is that it does not eliminate the incongruence with the professional role, but rather simply distributes it more equally between the genders. The schematic in Figure 1 suggests that, logically, greater balance between the genders and less overall psychic conflict could also be achieved by changing role expectations for professionals. In the course of advocating for greater participation by women in the workforce, there has been very little discussion around changing the nature of the work environment itself (Goldin, 2014). There is a limit to the amount of travel or late-night meetings one can manage with small children at home regardless of parent gender. One way to achieve greater equality in work and family outcomes is to promote a shift in work culture that allows young couples to have the time they need to be parents. Time is a finite resource, and so long as the norm is long work weeks with little flexibility, it will be virtually impossible for both parents to succeed in such work roles. In that case, the family will have no choice but to have one parent take a different "track." But that has consequences for our society. Fifty percent of all medical degrees, law degrees, and Ph.D.'s are earned by women. As a society, can we afford to lose that talent from our skilled professional labor force, whether it is women or men who step away from their careers? Can our expectations for work life be adjusted to allow young people to have both a gratifying career and, at the same time, fully engage with raising children? The alternative solution to managing work and family in the absence of change to the work culture is to not have children. This alternative has its own associated issues, including the problematic nature of below replacement fertility rates and the attendant difficulties that go with that (McDonald, 2000). A lot has changed during the past 60 years with respect to women's participation in the labor force. It may be time to look at changes to the culture of the work world to bring it into better alignment with the needs of young families going forward.

Summary

In this final section, we have considered several ways to bring about greater balance in the identity representations of women and men as depicted in Figure 1. One path is to strengthen the connection between the role *dad* and the social category men such that this role is as likely to come to mind when thinking about men as the role *mom* is for women. By encouraging perceivers to think of becoming a dad as a transformative experience in which one joins an enduring and profoundly meaningful category (i.e., increasing essentialist perceptions of fathers), the psychological importance of mothers and fathers will be more on par, promoting more equal treatment. In addition to producing more equal outcomes for the genders, strengthening the tie of dads to men has the added benefit of a more positive trait characterization of men. Changing the content of the social roles themselves would also promote greater equality. Such change needs to happen not only for parent roles but, as importantly, for worker roles as well. By creating greater balance in the identity representations depicted in Figure 1, we suggest there will be greater parity in the resulting psychological and behavioral responses by men and women to managing work and family roles, which, in turn, will produce greater equality in work and family outcomes.

Conclusions

Much of this chapter has focused on women – how they are perceived in their role as mothers both by others and by themselves, and the conflict these perceptions generate when combined with their role as a professional. We have presented some data regarding perceptions of men and how those might be shifted by emphasizing their role as fathers. In fact, there is quite a body of literature now that speaks to the positive consequences of strong involvement by men in their role as fathers for children, for the fathers themselves, and for marriages (Feldman, 2000; Gaunt & Scott, 2014, 2017; Lamb, 2010). Of note, there are also indicators that men themselves are at a crossroads with regards to their identity. We noted above a manipulation intended to evoke a threat response in which male participants read an op-ed piece describing the problematic nature of men in society. That op-ed piece was not fabricated but rather appeared in *The New York Times.* It detailed behavioral problems men are experiencing – e.g., high rates of unemployment, drug use, and incarceration, and one could plausibly argue these are due, in part, to the erosion of the traditional definition of manhood in society. Rather than fight to regain or reinstate

that role (which entails support for highly gendered power divisions), emphasizing the critical role of men

as fathers within families and communities could provide a partial answer to questions like those posed in

Figure 1 – What is my place in the world? Am I a valued and accepted member of my groups? Embracing

their role as fathers could thus help not only men, but their children and their marriages as well. It would

help promote greater equality for women: Given that there is a fixed quantity of childcare responsibilities,

the more of these men take on, the fewer women are responsible for, moving mothers and fathers even

more quickly into balance. Finally, if mothers and fathers unite in their push for family-friendly work

environments, this generates much greater pressure on employers than if only women are viewed as

"needing" accommodations for families. Men face stigma when they ask for flexibility at work (Coltrane,

Miller, DeHaan, & Stewart, 2013; Vandello, Hettinger, Bosson, & Siddiqi, 2013), but if asking for flexibility

becomes the norm, it will aid in destigmatizing it.

What are next steps that might promote the sort of gender balance envisioned by those who

champion equal opportunities for women and men? First, we suggest that simply being aware of these

dynamics helps create a climate where we can work to change the situation. We very much need to shift

the conversation away from this being a "women's problem," that women need to figure out how to

achieve work-family balance, or make different career choices, and instead frame it as an issue regarding

the health of families, of communities, and of the nation. We need to recognize that men, too, struggle

with rigid cultural scripts that restrict their behavioral choices. Promoting the idea that men are

fundamentally changed by the presence of children can help with framing these issues, advocating for

healthy families as a shared societal goal. It is in the best interest of our communities to promote active

engagement by both parents in childcare while at the same time allowing for career development. To

that end, it is absolutely critical to foster policies such as paid parental leave, flexible work schedules, and

on-site high quality and affordable day care, which enable young parents to successfully manage careers

and a family. And instead of moving in the direction of longer work weeks and greater travel, we need to

foster a culture in which respecting family needs is part of developing a well-balanced and talented

workforce. Finally, it is, of course, imperative to recognize that different solutions will work for different

families. The goal is certainly not that moms and dads need to work the exact same number of hours or

change the same number of diapers, or even that having children or a career is the right decision for

everyone. There will be diversity in how couples solve competing demands from work and family. But at

present, the typical solution remains firmly entrenched in outdated definitions of parent roles that

ultimately contribute to continued inequalities between the genders. Changing cultural scripts to bring

greater balance in the self-concepts of young men and women will promote greater equality in both work

and family identities.

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Table 1

Of the 25 Positive Traits Rated as Most Characteristic of Each Group, Overlap in Those Shared by Professionals with Dads and Moms

Traits rated as characteristic of:		
<u>Dads, Moms, & Professionals</u>	<u>Dads & Professionals Only</u>	<u>Moms & Professionals Only</u>
Capable	Ambitious	Attentive
Dependable	Confident	
Determined	Decisive	
Devoted	Industrious	
Provider	Intelligent	
Reliable	Mature	
	Rationale	
	Self-Reliant	
	Stable	
	Strong	

Note: Adapted from Study 1, Hodges and Park (2013).

Table 2

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Health and Well-Being Measures Predicted by Gender Alone, and by Gender and Expected Role Conflict for the Self

	Gender Only	Gender Plus Expected Role-Conflict	
		Gender	Expected Role-Conflict
Negative Outcomes			
State Anxiety	**.15*****	.06	**.15*****
CES-D (Depression)	**.11***	.03	**.14****
Perceived Stress Scale – Home	**.10***	.02	**.21*****
Perceived Stress Scale – School	**.16*****	.05	**.17*****
Positive Outcomes			
Self-Efficacy	**-.18*****	-.08	**-.33*****
Self-Esteem	**-.13****	-.09	**-.11***
Life Satisfaction – General	-.03	.02	**-.15****
Life Satisfaction – Career	**-.14*****	-.07	**-.16*****
Life Satisfaction – Parent	**-.09***	**-.09***	**-.10***
Life Satisfaction – Relationship	.01	.08	**-.12****
Life Satisfaction – Personal	-.05	.02	**-.10***

Note: Significant effects are in bold. Adapted from Park, Hodges, & McPherson (2018).
***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05

Table 3

Traits seen as More Characteristic of Scientists than of Early Childhood Educators

Scientists are seen as more....		Scientists are seen as less...
Aloof	Intelligent	Caring
Ambitious	Isolated	Compassionate
Analytical	Logical	Emotional
Arrogant	Meticulous	Encouraging
Boastful	Objective	Gentle
Cold	Rational	Gullible
Competent	Robotic	Kind
Critical	Scientific	Nurturing
Cutthroat	Self-absorbed	Patient
Decisive	Selfish	Supportive
Driven	Skillful	Talkative
Egotistical	Uncertain	Understanding
Inconsiderate	Unsociable	Warm

Note: Adapted from McPherson, Banchefsky, and Park (in preparation).
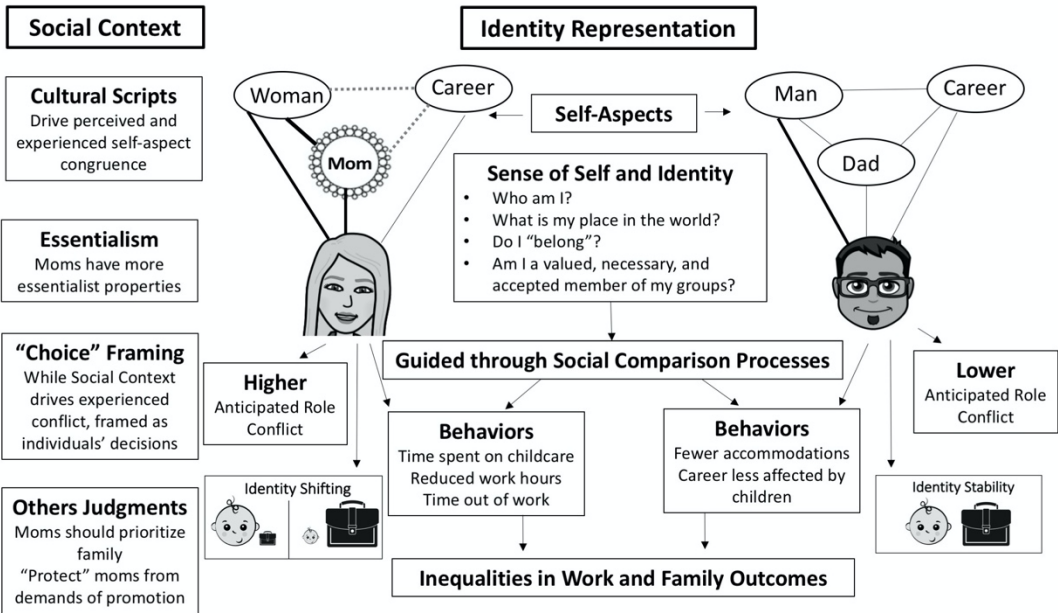
Figure 1. Schematic of identity representation, self-aspect conflict, and behavioral responses for young women and men in reaction to the social context under which these processes unfold. For the self-aspects, solid lines indicate congruent relations and dashed lines indicate incongruent relations, with heavier lines indicating stronger relations.
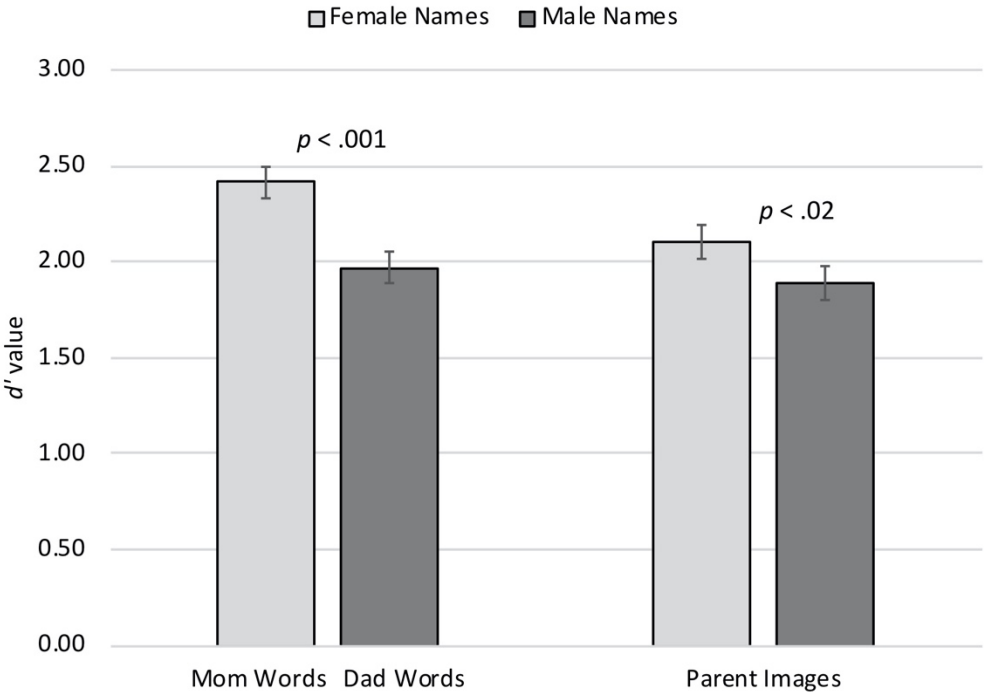
Figure 2. On a Go/No-Go Task, women were more strongly associated with the social role *mom* and with parent images than men were with the role *dad* and parent images. Error bars reflect +1 and -1 standard error of the mean. Adapted from Park, Smith, and Correll (2010, Study 1).
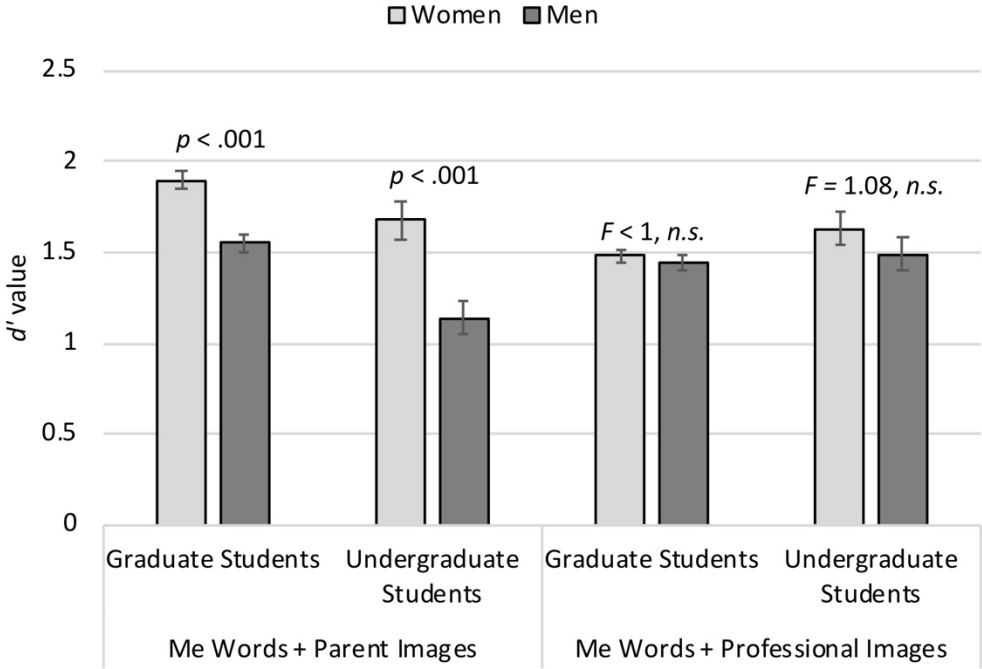
*Figure 3.* Implicit associations between self and parent images were stronger for women than for men in both graduate and undergraduate student samples (left panel). Implicit associations between self and career images were equally strong for the genders (right panel). Error bars reflect +1 and -1 standard error of the mean. Adapted from Park and Hodges (2009) and Park, Hodges, & McPherson (2018).
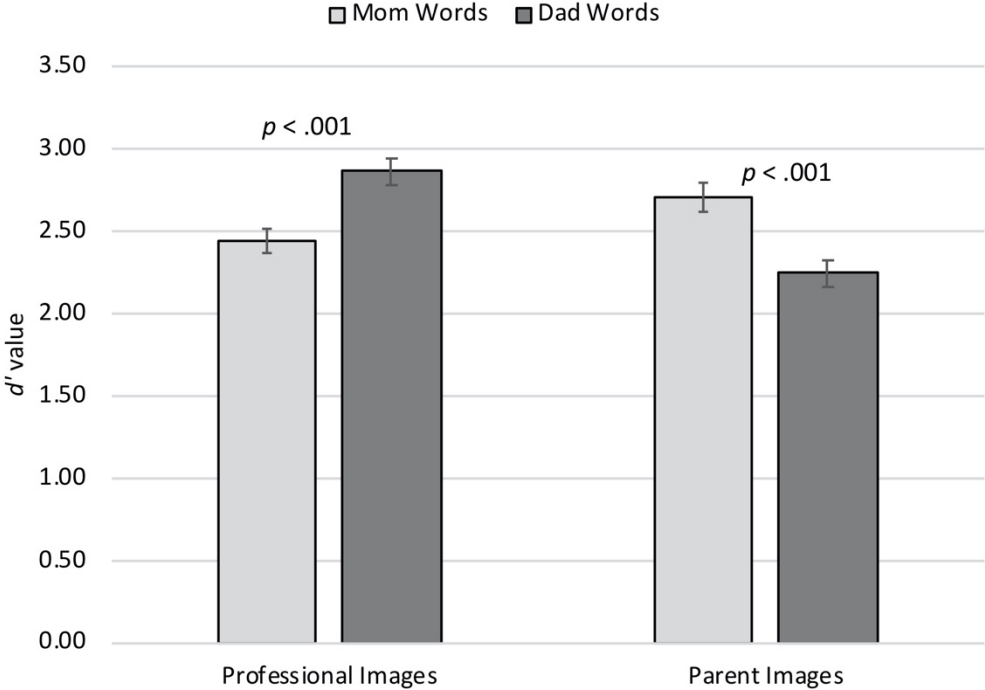
Figure 4. Dad is more strongly associated with professional images than mom, and less strongly

associated with parent images than mom. Error bars reflect +1 and -1 standard error of the mean.

Adapted from Park, Smith, and Correll (2010, Study 1).
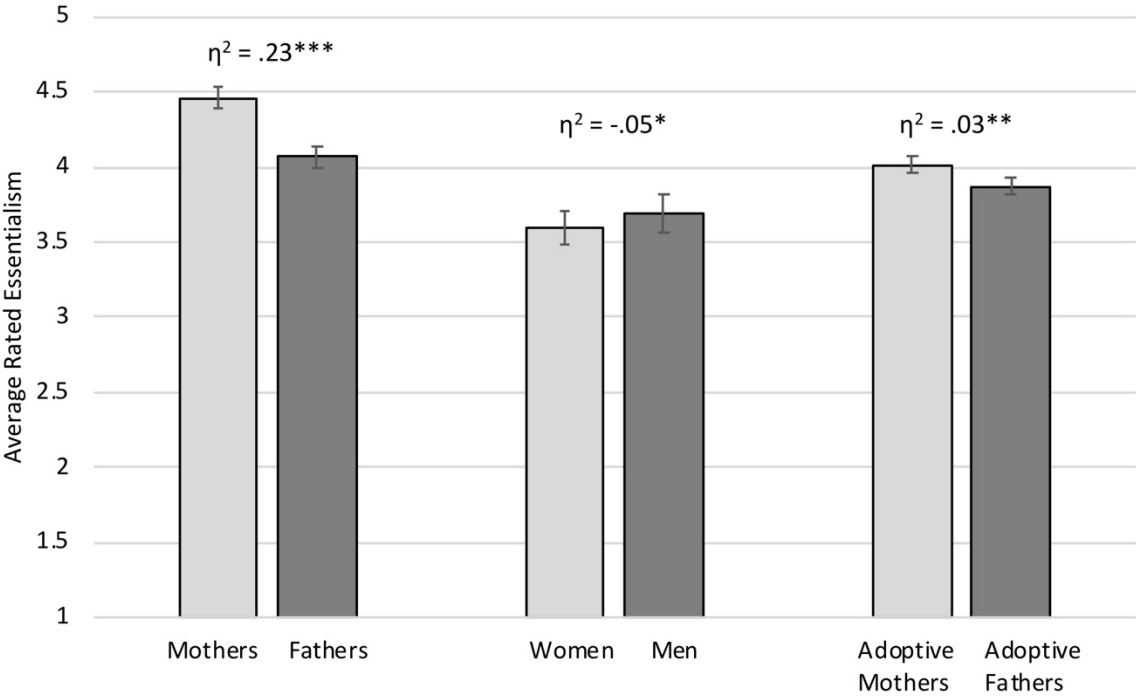
Figure 5. Mean ratings of essentialism for mothers and fathers, for women and men, and for

adoptive mothers and fathers. Error bars reflect +1 and -1 standard error of the mean. Adapted from

Park, Banchefsky, and Reynolds (2015; Studies 1, 2, and 5, respectively). ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$
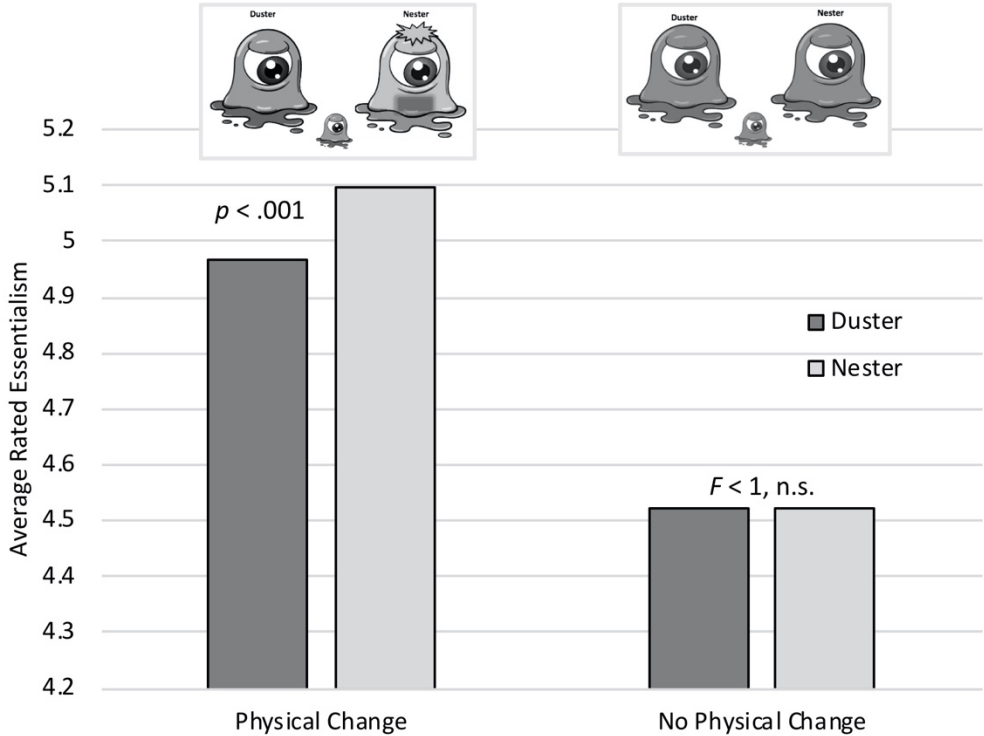
Figure 6. Mean ratings of essentialism for father (Duster) versus mother (Nester) analogue as a function of whether the Nester undergoes physical change in the course of reproduction. Adapted from Park, Banchefsky, and Reynolds (2015; Study 3).
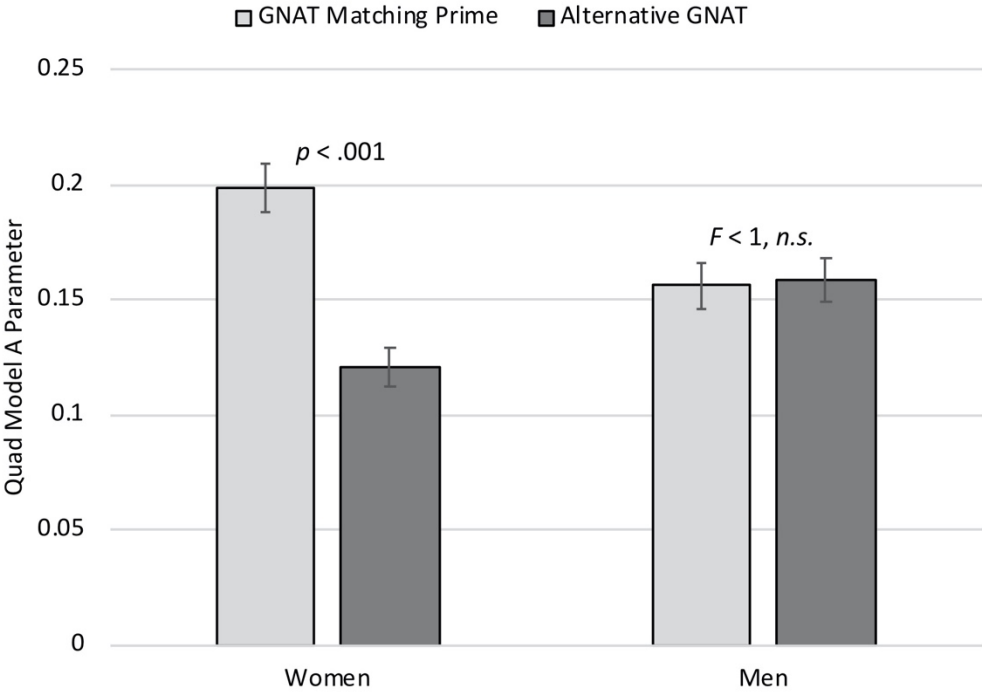
Figure 7. Identity shifting for women versus identity stability for men as measured with the A

parameter from the Quad Model. Error bars reflect +1 and -1 standard error of the mean. Adapted from

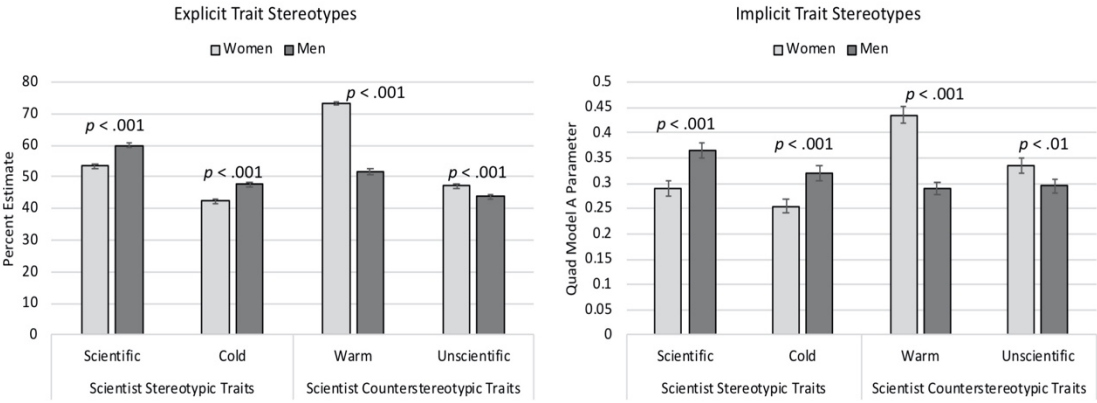Park, Hodges, Mellinger, and Correll (in preparation).

Figure 8. Men were judged as having more scientific stereotypic traits and fewer scientific

counterstereotypic traits than women on both explicit (percent estimate) and implicit (Go/No-Go Task)

measures. Error bars reflect +1 and -1 standard error of the mean. Adapted from McPherson,
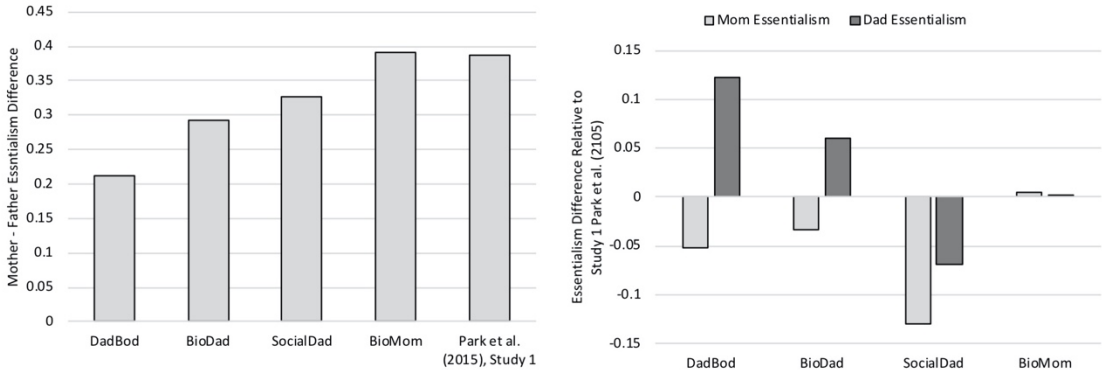
Banchefsky, and Park (in preparation).

Figure 9. Differences in rated essentialism for mothers relative to fathers (left panel) as a function of condition manipulations describing changes parents experience (McPherson, Banchefsky, & Park, 2018, Study 2), and for comparison, differences in baseline judgments of essentialism (Park, Banchefsky, & Reynolds, 2015, Study 1). The right panel depicts differences relative to baseline judgments (from Park et al., 2015) by condition for mothers and fathers separately.
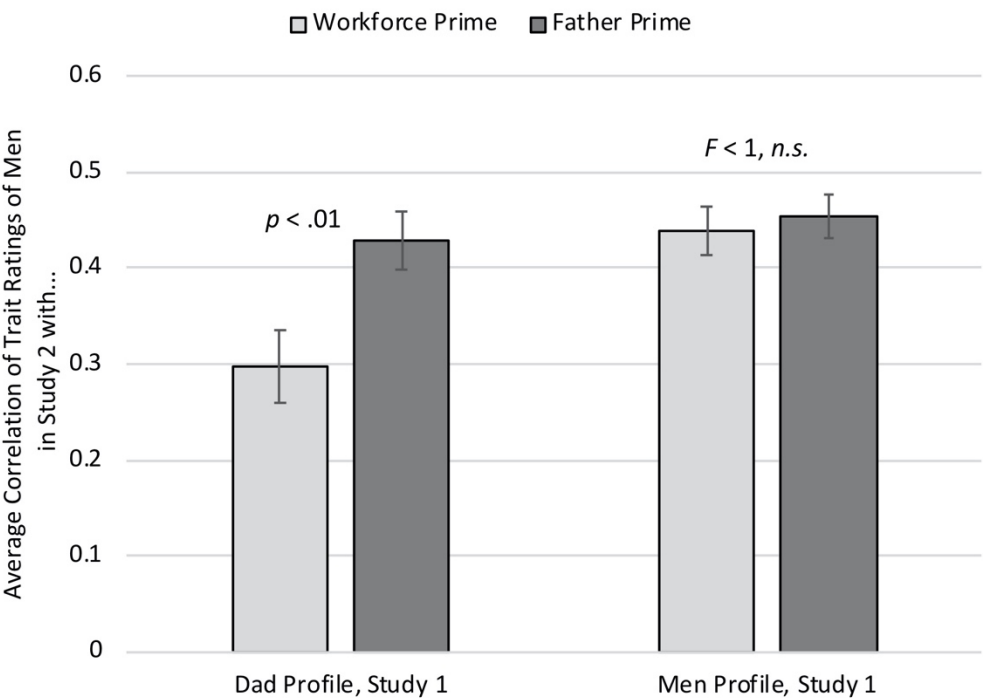
Figure 10. Ratings of men map more closely onto those of the typical dad after thinking about American Fathers than after thinking about the American Workforce, and map no less strongly onto those of the typical man. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean. Adapted from Park and Banchefsky (2018, Study 2).

Footnotes

[1] Of note, recent discussions that move away from a binary definition of gender might profoundly affect these processes. None of our research to date explores this possibility and thus we have no data to address how nonbinary definitions might change the representations depicted in Figure 1. Some evidence suggests that gay couples find themselves dividing tasks along traditional lines, not because they want to but because of institutional constraints (see Antecol & Steinberger, 2013). Also, with respect to paid work, our research has focused primarily on identities around a profession or career, largely because these are the women and young couples with the resources and opportunities to challenge traditional gender roles. Going forward, it will be important to ask specifically how these processes unfold for those who work in lower paying jobs, as the issues most likely have both some similarities but significant differences.