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# Think Manager–Think Parent? Investigating the fatherhood advantage and the motherhood penalty using the Think Manager–Think Male paradigm

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## Abstract

Men remain overrepresented in leadership positions, due in part to a think manager–think male (TMTM) association whereby stereotypes of men are more similar to stereotypes of manager than are stereotypes of women. Building on research into the *motherhood penalty* and *fatherhood advantage*, we extend Schein's TMTM paradigm to investigate whether parenthood exacerbates the phenomenon. In Study 1 ( $N = 326$ ), we find clear support for a fatherhood advantage, such that fathers are described as more similar to managers compared to either men in general, women in general, or to mothers. We did not find evidence for a motherhood penalty. Indeed, mothers, compared to women in general, were seen as *more* similar to managers (a motherhood advantage within women), while relative to fathers, mothers were seen as less similar to managers, thus, a gender penalty remained within parenthood. We replicate these findings in a preregistered Study 2 ( $N = 561$ ), and further show that patterns are similar for ideal managers (prescriptive manager stereotypes, Study 1) and leaders more generally (Study 2). Taken together, the results suggest that gender and managerial stereotypes do not reveal a simple fatherhood advantage and motherhood penalty. Rather, stereotypes of parenthood may provide benefits for both mothers and fathers—suggestive of a parenthood advantage, at least in terms of stereotype content.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Despite many gains in workplace gender equality over the past decades, men remain overrepresented in positions of power and leadership. In 2019, women occupied only 29% of senior leadership roles (Grant Thornton, 2019). In the United States, while women make up almost 50% of employees they represent only a third of managers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019), and at the highest levels (CEOs of Fortune 500 companies) there were more men named James than there were women (Miller et al., 2018). One factor contributing to this continuing gender asymmetry is the stubborn persistence of gender stereotypes and their interplay with the stereotypes of

leaders. Building on research into the penalties associated with motherhood (e.g., Firth, 1982), and the contrasted advantage of fatherhood (e.g., Lundberg & Rose, 2000), we extend research on the compatibility of gender stereotypes and leadership stereotypes to examine whether they are exacerbated by parenthood.

### 1.1 | The Think manager–Think Male association

Gender stereotypes are pervasive and portray women and men as differing primarily in their levels of two major attributes: communality and agency (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Heilman, 2001). Communality

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refers to attributes such as helpful, nurturing, and kind, while agency refers to traits such as assertive, independent, and competitive (e.g., Abele, 2003). While women are thought to be highly communal but not very agentic, men are thought to be high in agency but lacking communality (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Heilman, 2001). Thus, the conceptions of women and men are not only different, but they are also oppositional, with members of one gender exhibiting qualities that the other gender is thought to be lacking. Importantly, despite the considerable changes in women's social roles over the past decades, there has been little change in men's perceived agency advantage, and women's communality advantage has increased over time (Eagly, Nater, Miller, Kaufmann, & Sczesny, 2020).

Despite evidence for a "female leadership advantage" (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly et al., 2014)—whereby followers generally prefer transformational leadership which contain more communal styles (i.e., stereotypical feminine) over those that are more agentic and masculine (Hentschel et al., 2018)—an examination of stereotypes tells another story. A large body of work clearly demonstrates that the attributes associated with leadership are much more in line with those thought of as typical of men than those thought of as typical of women, resulting in biased evaluation, selection, and promotion of men over women (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983). In other words, men, compared to equally qualified women, are often evaluated as a better fit for leadership positions and are more often chosen for such positions because perceivers "fill in the blanks" with gender stereotypes or attend more to gender stereotypical attributes of the target than those that are counter-stereotypical. This asymmetry in compatibility of male and female stereotypes with leadership stereotypes is often referred to as the think manager-think male (TMTM) association (Heilman et al., 1989; Ryan et al., 2011; Schein, 1973).

The commonly used paradigm to study this association was developed by Schein (1973). She presented participants with a list of 92 attributes and asked them to indicate how characteristic each term was of women in general, of men in general, or of successful managers. The attributes were originally selected to maximally distinguish between men and women, and thus, some are related to agency (e.g., competitive, independent), some are related to communality (e.g., sociable, kind), and some unrelated to these two constructs (e.g., values pleasant surroundings, intuitive). Analyzing the similarity between the trait ratings through intraclass correlations, Schein found that men, compared to women, were seen as more similar to successful managers, and the think manager-think male association was coined.

Since then, the findings have been replicated, demonstrating the robustness of the phenomenon over time, culture, and context (for a meta-analysis, see Koenig et al., 2011). The findings have also been extended (e.g., Braun et al., 2017; Liberman & Golom, 2015; Ryan et al., 2011). For example, Ryan et al. (2011) found that while the TMTM association occurs using descriptive stereotypes (i.e., traits that characterize successful managers), the association is no longer present when using prescriptive leadership stereotypes (i.e., traits that characterize *ideal* successful managers; Heilman, 2001). This

finding is in line with the "female leadership advantage" (Eagly & Carli, 2003), such that ideal leaders may indeed be less masculine than descriptions of managers in general.

The TMTM paradigm has primarily been used to examine the compatibility of stereotypes of leader and stereotypes of women and men in general. However, particular subtypes of women and men (e.g., based on race and ethnicity; sexual minorities; women in men in specific occupations) can be stereotyped quite differently from women and men in general (e.g., Clausell & Fiske, 2005; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012). In this way, it may well be that some of these intersecting roles or identities may enhance, or decrease, the TMTM association. Of particular interest to us here are stereotypes at the intersection of parenthood and gender, as parenthood brings with it benefits for men in the workplace (the fatherhood advantage or bonus), while it has disadvantages for women (termed the motherhood penalty; e.g., Glauber, 2008; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008).

## 1.2 | Motherhood penalty and fatherhood advantage

Working mothers often still find themselves "trapped between a rock and a hard place." In the home, they continue to shoulder disproportionate amounts of childcare responsibilities (Craig & Mullan, 2010) and, in line with gender stereotypes, are expected to do so (Park et al., 2008). Women who fail to prioritize their family over work risk being perceived as inadequate parents and partners (Morgenroth & Heilman, 2017).

At the same time, in the workplace, mothers face disadvantages over and above those that occur on the basis of gender—a phenomenon called the motherhood penalty. These include a wage penalty, with mothers facing a significant wage penalty for every child that they have (e.g., Budig & England, 2001) such that the wage gap between women with and without children is larger than the gender pay gap as a whole (Crittenden, 2001). In addition, working mothers are less likely to be interviewed for a position (Firth, 1982), be hired into a position (Fuegen et al., 2004), or given advancement opportunities (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008).

For men, on the contrary, becoming a father has very different consequences. While expectations are slowly changing, fathers are still seen primarily as providers rather than caregivers (Banchefsky & Park, 2016), which fits much better with workplace expectations (e.g., Acker, 1990; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). In line with this argument, men are not penalized when they become fathers. Indeed, they receive higher pay than childless men (Glauber, 2008; Lundberg & Rose, 2000)—an effect termed the fatherhood bonus.

One of the key factors underlying these dynamics is, once more, the effect of gender stereotypes (e.g., Correll et al., 2007; Cuddy et al., 2004; King, 2008). For example, working mothers are evaluated more negatively than their childless female counterparts such that they are seen as less competent, while working fathers are perceived as warmer without being seen as less competent (Cuddy et al., 2004). Thus, parenthood seems to affect

the stereotypical evaluations of women and men at work quite differently.

In line with this, and using a similar methodology to the TMTM studies, Park and Banchevsky (2018) demonstrated that when characterized by descriptive traits, mothers and women in general were seen as highly similar, however, the traits rated as typical of men corresponded much less closely to those of fathers. For example, many communal attributes such as being affectionate, generous, and supportive were seen as typical of women in general, mothers, and fathers, but not as typical of men in general. In contrast, many negative attributes indicating a lack of communality (e.g., selfish, aggressive, greedy) emerged for men in general, but not for fathers, women in general, or mothers.

Looking more directly at the intersection of parenthood and gender in the workplace, Hodges and Park (2013) investigated the overlap between gendered parental stereotypes and stereotypes of professionals. They found that, compared to mothers, fathers were seen as more similar to professionals. For example, fathers were perceived as possessing agentic attributes such as being self-reliant, decisive, and strong, which was also seen as typical of professionals, while mothers were not perceived as having these attributes (see also Park et al., 2010, for implicit behavioral associations). Similarly, evidence from the shifting standards literature shows that parenthood polarizes the perception of women and men such that mothers are held to a particularly high standard in workplace contexts (Fuegen et al., 2004).

Taken together, these studies can shed light on one of the psychological processes underlying the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood advantage: stereotypes at the intersection of gender and parenthood. When becoming fathers, men gain a communality bonus without losing their perceived agency, making them appear more positive than before. In contrast, when women become mothers they do not gain agency, and indeed they may lose it, and their communality alone does not help them in the workplace.

While these processes shed light on gendered parenthood inequalities in the workplace, they do not speak directly to leadership positions. We bring together work on the TMTM association, with work on the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood advantage and argue that these effects are likely to be particularly pronounced for leadership positions, in part because leadership roles are seen as particularly masculine and agentic. However, to our knowledge, no research thus far has directly investigated the fit of gendered stereotypes of parenthood with leadership stereotypes. In this paper, we fill this gap by testing how parenthood affects the TMTM association, that is, the extent to which the stereotypes of fathers and mothers, compared to those of men and women in general, fit with leadership stereotypes.

## 2 | STUDY 1

We extend work on the TMTM association by investigating the effects of parenthood on the perceived fit of women and men with

leadership positions. We use the classic TMTM paradigm, rather than measures used specifically in the context of parenthood stereotypes (e.g., Banchevsky & Park, 2018), to aid comparison with past work on leadership stereotypes. In line with previous research, we predict the following:

**Hypothesis 1** *Men, compared to women, will be rated as more similar to successful managers (TMTM).*

We will test this hypothesis both within gender, for women and men in general, and within parenthood, for mothers and fathers.

**Hypothesis 2** *The TMTM association will be exacerbated for parents such that fathers will be rated as more similar to managers than men in general (the fatherhood advantage), while mothers will be rated as less similar to managers than women in general (the motherhood penalty).*

For exploratory purposes, we also explore whether these associations differ between female and male participants and extend the work beyond descriptive leadership stereotypes (characterizing successful managers) to investigate these associations for prescriptive leadership stereotypes (characterizing ideal managers; see Ryan et al., 2011). Examining prescriptive leadership stereotypes will allow us to see whether the preference for more stereotypical feminine leadership styles (the female leadership advantage, Eagly & Carli, 2003) may affect ideal stereotype fit for mothers and fathers. However, we have no predictions regarding these associations.

## 2.1 | Method

### 2.1.1 | Participants

A total of 329 U.S. American participants with at least 1 year of work experience were recruited on Mechanical Turk.<sup>1</sup> Please note that due to the nature of the analyses, number of participants is not directly linked to statistical power. To ensure data quality, we excluded participants who did not respond to any of the items, or gave the same response to more than 90% of the items. Additionally, we excluded participants who indicated that they did not have a year or more of work experience.

The final sample was 326 (170 women, 155 men, and 1 did not indicate their gender). The average age of our sample was 38.94 years

<sup>1</sup>Data were collected at two separate points of time and later merged. We also accidentally did not restrict data collection to participants from the United States, and thus, recruited a large proportion of data from Indian participants (35% of the original sample) and participants from other countries (21%). As research shows that there is cultural variation in the TMTM effect (Schein & Mueller, 1992), we excluded all non-American participants. Despite these exclusions, our sample size per condition is comparable to other research using the TMTM paradigm (e.g., Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011). Results are the same when including participants of all nationalities.

( $SD = 12.62$ ). The majority of our participants had some management experience (68.10%) and were employed in intermediate (51.54%) or senior (20.70%) positions. In terms of highest levels of education achieved, one participant indicated they had not received any education, 24.85% of our sample achieved a high school diploma, 42.64% had a Bachelor's degree, 14.42% a Master's degree, 8.28% a postgraduate degree, and 9.51% some other form of educational degree.

### 2.1.2 | Design and procedure

Our procedure and measures largely matched that of Schein (1973). Participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions: They rated women, men, mothers, fathers, successful middle managers, or ideal successful middle managers. They were presented with the attributes listed in the Schein Descriptive Index (Schein, 1973) and indicated how typical the attributes were of the group they were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (not characteristic) to 5 (characteristic). The index consists of 92 different attributes and includes positive (e.g., analytic ability, aware of feelings of others) and negative (e.g., bitter, vulgar) attributes, some of which are stereotypically masculine (e.g., competitive, dominant) while others are stereotypically feminine (e.g., demure, tactful). Finally, participants provided demographic information before being debriefed in full.

## 2.2 | Results

Following classic work using the TMTM paradigm, we calculated intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) using the mean values of traits for each group. In other words, the data set was restructured such that each attribute rather than each participant was now one case (i.e., row), while the mean values for each group (i.e., women, men, mothers, fathers, successful middle managers, and ideal successful middle managers) were the different variables (i.e., columns). Thus, the ICCs indicate overlap or similarity of the ratings of the different groups. In line with Koenig et al. (2011) argument (see also McGraw & Wong, 1996), we calculated ICCs using the two-way mixed, single measures ICC, which measures absolute agreement but accounts for the fixed column factor (managers), rather than the one-way, single-rater, random effects model which is more commonly used in the TMTM literature. Results using these different methods are generally very similar, but the commonly used method may yield slightly inaccurate results because it does not take the fact that stereotypes of both women/mothers and men/father are compared to the same group (managers) into account (see Koenig et al., 2011).

### 2.2.1 | Tests of hypotheses

We first calculated the ICCs for women, mothers, men, and fathers, separately for managers and ideal managers. To test whether the

**TABLE 1** Intraclass correlation coefficients (Study 1)

	Managers	Ideal managers
Women	0.49 [0.32, 0.63]	0.49 [0.32, 0.63]
Mothers	0.69 [0.56, 0.78]	0.71 [0.58, 0.80]
Men	0.67 [0.54, 0.77]	0.57 [0.41, 0.69]
Fathers	0.91 [0.87, 0.94]	0.88 [0.82, 0.92]

Note.: Values in brackets refer to 95% confidence intervals.

values were different from each other, we examined whether the confidence interval of one ICC contained the other ICC. If it does not, the ICCs can be considered different from each other.

As can be seen in Table 1, we found the predicted TMTM association (Hypothesis 1), as confidence intervals indicated that the overlap between ratings of managers and men was significantly greater from that of managers and women. For parents, the expected pattern also emerged, with fathers being rated as more similar to managers than were mothers.

As predicted (Hypothesis 2), fathers were rated as more similar to managers than men in general. However, we did not find that mothers were rated as less similar to managers than women in general. In fact, the opposite was the case—mothers were rated as more similar to managers than women in general.

For ideal managers, there was no TMTM association for men and women in general, but it did emerge for mothers and fathers. There was also a parenthood advantage for both women and men.

### 2.2.2 | Do these associations differ by participant gender?

As can be seen in Table 2, we surprisingly found the TMTM association among female, but not among male participants. For parents, the pattern emerged among both female and male participants. Female and male participants saw fathers, compared to men in general, as more similar to managers. The “motherhood advantage” we observed in the main analyses seemed driven by female participants. For ideal managers, we found no differences between female and male participants.

## 2.3 | Discussion

We replicated the TMTM association for descriptions of managers, such that women were seen as less similar to managers than men, and extended it to parents, where we found that mothers were seen as less similar to managers than fathers. This is suggestive of an overall gender penalty for women. As predicted, we also found a fatherhood advantage such that fathers, compared to men in general, were seen as more similar to both managers and ideal managers.

We did not find any evidence for the motherhood penalty. On the contrary, mothers, compared to women in general, were

**TABLE 2** Intraclass correlation coefficients for male and female participants (Study 1)

	Female participants		Male participants	
	Managers	Ideal managers	Managers	Ideal managers
Women	0.48 [0.30, 0.62]	0.46 [0.28, 0.60]	0.47 [0.30, 0.62]	0.46 [0.29, 0.61]
Mothers	0.71 [0.59, 0.80]	0.70 [0.58, 0.79]	0.61 [0.46, 0.72]	0.63 [0.49, 0.74]
Men	0.70 [0.58, 0.79]	0.58 [0.43, 0.70]	0.58 [0.43, 0.70]	0.51 [0.34, 0.65]
Fathers	0.92 [0.88, 0.95]	0.86 [0.80, 0.91]	0.87 [0.81, 0.91]	0.85 [0.77, 0.91]

Note.: Values in brackets refer to 95% confidence intervals.

seen as *more* similar to managers and ideal managers, what could be termed a motherhood advantage. Indeed, mothers' similarity to managers was raised to the level of men in general, such that it was comparable to that of men's similarity to managers, but it was significantly lower than that of fathers. Our data thus suggest a parenthood advantage rather than a fatherhood advantage, although the fatherhood advantage was somewhat larger than the motherhood advantage.

When examining prescriptive leadership stereotypes through ideal managers, the TMTM association disappeared, in line with previous findings (Ryan et al., 2011). However, this was only the case for women and men in general; for mothers and fathers, we still found the effect, with fathers, compared to mothers, being rated as more similar to ideal managers. This suggests that for prescriptive leadership stereotypes, a TMTM association exists for parents, but not for women and men in general. However, the patterns in the descriptive and prescriptive manager conditions were extremely similar, and, indeed, the ICC between these two conditions was 0.97 [0.94, 0.98], suggesting that our participants did not differentiate between successful managers and ideal successful managers. Any differences between the conditions should, therefore, be interpreted with caution.

Overall, the findings did not differ much between female and male participants. However, it appears that the motherhood advantage may be driven particularly by female participants. Moreover, we surprisingly found the basic TMTM association only among female participants. However, given that these findings were not consistent across the different manager conditions, these gendered patterns should be interpreted with caution.

The findings regarding the parenthood advantage for both women and men are surprising and contrary to previous findings and predictions from the shifting standard model (see Fuegen et al., 2004), arguing that parenthood and gender interact to provide fathers with particular advantages and women with particular disadvantages. Instead, these patterns are more in line with predictions from *social role theory* (Eagly, 1987) arguing that social roles (e.g., parenthood) shape stereotypes, regardless of gender. Additionally, the finding of an overall parenthood advantage may offer support for the female leadership advantage (Eagly & Carli, 2003), with its emphasis on communal leadership traits, traits that may be associated with parenthood.

As patterns regarding the motherhood advantage were contrary to our hypothesis, we set out to replicate our study and also address

some methodological issues, we had in Study 1 (such as excluding a large proportion of our participants). Moreover, we wanted to test whether these effects extend to leadership stereotypes more broadly and eliminate the possibility that our results were due to the fact that we had asked about middle managers specifically, a level at which women are fairly well-represented today (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

### 3 | STUDY 2

In this preregistered study (see [https://osf.io/62kdp/?view\\_only=347665bb81aa495280522d50bce3fb4c](https://osf.io/62kdp/?view_only=347665bb81aa495280522d50bce3fb4c)), we deleted the ideal manager condition (given it was very similar to the manager condition) and instead added a general leadership condition to explore the possibility that the effects were due to the fact that women are fairly well represented in middle management. In line with findings from Study 1, we now predicted the following:

**Hypothesis 1** *There will be a think manager–think male and a think leader–think male association such that men, compared to women, will be rated as more similar to managers and leaders.*

We will test this hypothesis within gender, for women and men in general, and within parenthood, for mothers and fathers.

**Hypothesis 2** *There will be a think manager–think parent and a think leader–think parent association, that is, a parenthood advantage, such that (a) fathers, compared to men in general, will be rated as more similar to managers and leaders, and (b) mothers, compared to women in general, will be rated as more similar to managers and leaders.*

As the fatherhood advantage seemed somewhat larger than the motherhood advantage in Study 1, and because leaders (compared to managers) may be perceived as particularly masculine, we also predict:

**Hypothesis 3** *The parenthood advantage will be more pronounced for fathers than mothers, particularly when rating leaders.*

In addition to these preregistered hypotheses, we will explore whether these processes are more pronounced for male participants

than female participants and what it is about the content of stereotype of mothers and fathers that make them more similar to managers and leaders.

### 3.1 | Method

#### 3.1.1 | Participants

In line with our preregistration, we collected data from 600 employed U.S. Americans via the Prolific website (100 per condition). We chose Prolific rather than MTurk to increase data quality (see Ryan, 2018). To further ensure the quality of our data, we excluded 29 participants who gave the same response to more than 90% of the items. We also excluded 12 participants who indicated that they had less than 1 year of work experience, and two participants who indicated that they had 218 and 121 years of work experience, respectively.

The final sample of 561 participants included 244 women, 316 men, and 1 genderqueer person. The average age was 33.69 years ( $SD = 10.23$ ). More than half of our participants had some management experience (58.09%); 10.51% were employed in very junior positions, 21.89% in junior positions, 46.94% in intermediate positions, 15.94% in senior positions, and 4.73% in very senior positions. In terms of highest levels of education achieved, 27.35% of our sample held a high school diploma, 49.82% had a Bachelor's degree, 12.54% a Master's degree, 6.97% a postgraduate degree, and 3.31% some other form of educational degree.

#### 3.1.2 | Design and procedure

The design and procedure were identical to that of Study 1 with the exception of one change: the "ideal manager" condition was replaced by the "leader" condition.

### 3.2 | Results

#### 3.2.1 | Tests of hypotheses

We calculated the ICCs as described above. As can be seen in Table 3, we replicated the predicted (Hypothesis 1) TMTM effect, both for middle managers and for leaders, as well as both for men and women in general and for mothers and fathers, illustrating an overall gender penalty for women. We also found support for the parenthood advantage (Hypothesis 2): mothers, compared to women in general, were rated as more similar to middle managers and leaders, and the same was the case for fathers compared to men. Similar to the patterns in Study 1, the parenthood advantage brought women's ICCs up to the level of those for men in general, while fathers got an additional boost, being rated as extremely similar to middle managers and leaders. There were no differences between the middle manager

**TABLE 3** Intraclass correlation coefficients (Study 2)

	Middle managers	Leaders
Women	0.26 [0.06, 0.44]	0.20 [-0.00, 0.38]
Mothers	0.69 [0.56, 0.78]	0.62 [0.48, 0.73]
Men	0.63 [0.49, 0.74]	0.64 [0.50, 0.75]
Fathers	0.87 [0.80, 0.91]	0.82 [0.74, 0.88]

Note.: Values in brackets refer to 95% confidence intervals.

and leader conditions, which is perhaps unsurprising, given that the ICC between these two conditions was 0.95 [0.90, 0.97] meaning that the ratings of these two conditions were almost identical.

We did not find support for the prediction that the parenthood advantage would be more pronounced for fathers (Hypothesis 3). If anything, the reverse seemed to be the case.

#### 3.2.2 | Do these associations differ by participant gender?

Next, we explored whether these patterns differed by participant gender. As can be seen in Table 4, there were a number of differences between ratings made by female and male participants. For male participants, the TMTM pattern was evident on all dimensions—for managers and leaders and for men and women and for mothers and fathers. For female participants, we only found the TMTM association for leaders, but not for middle managers and the association disappeared when rating parents. These differences were driven by the fact that male participants, compared to female participants, rated women as less similar to managers and leaders, but men as more similar to managers. Indeed, it is striking to note that for male participants the ICCs between women and both managers and leaders were not significantly different from 0, that is, there was no relationship. Similarly, they rated mothers as less similar to managers and fathers as more similar to managers. These differences between ratings of male and female participants also led to interesting shifts in the overall patterns: while male participants rated men, compared to mothers, as more similar to managers, the opposite was the case for female participants—for them, the similarity between mothers and managers was larger than the similarity between men and managers.

Hypothesis 2 was supported for both female and male participants. In other words, both groups rated mothers and fathers, compared to women and men, respectively, as more similar to managers and leaders.

#### 3.2.3 | What drives the parenthood advantage?

While the analyses above can tell us the extent to which stereotypes of different groups overlap, they cannot tell us *what* makes mothers

**TABLE 4** Intraclass correlation coefficients for male and female participants (Study 2)

	Female participants		Male participants	
	Middle managers	Leaders	Middle managers	Leaders
Women	0.47 [0.29, 0.61]	0.35 [0.16, 0.52]	0.07 [-0.13, 0.27]	0.08 [-0.12, 0.27]
Mothers	0.74 [0.63, 0.82]	0.65 [0.52, 0.76]	0.59 [0.43, 0.71]	0.55 [0.39, 0.68]
Men	0.52 [0.35, 0.65]	0.57 [0.42, 0.70]	0.72 [0.60, 0.80]	0.68 [0.55, 0.77]
Fathers	0.80 [0.71, 0.86]	0.76 [0.62, 0.85]	0.88 [0.81, 0.92]	0.84 [0.77, 0.89]

Note.: Values in brackets refer to 95% confidence intervals.

**TABLE 5** Attributes that differentiated women from mothers and men from fathers

Women	Mothers	Men	Fathers
Adventurous	Assertive	Adventurous	Aware of feelings of others
Desire for friendship	Authoritative	Aggressive	Cheerful
Easily influenced	Decisive	Competitive	Courteous
Interested in own appearance	Desires responsibility	Forceful	Emotionally stable
Passive	Direct	Hides emotion	Generous
Sociable	Dominant	High need for power	Grateful
Sophisticated	Emotionally stable	Interested in own appearance	Helpful
Strong need for social acceptance	Firm	Quarrelsome	Humanitarian values
Talkative	Frank	Selfish	Intuitive
	Helpful	Strong need for achievement	Kind
	Independent	Strong need for monetary rewards	Knows the way of the world
	Industrious	Strong need for social acceptance	Leadership ability
	Kind	Vulgar	Modest
	Leadership ability		Not conceited about appearance
	Logical		Self-controlled
	Not conceited about appearance		Self-reliant
	Not uncomfortable about being aggressive		Sociable
	Self-confident		Strong need for security
	Self-controlled		Sympathetic
	Self-reliant		Tactful
	Speedy recovery from emotional disturbance		Understanding
	Steady		Values pleasant surroundings
	Understanding		Well informed

and fathers appear more similar to managers and leaders. Therefore, we next explored the content of stereotypes of mothers compared to women in general and fathers compared to men in general, as well as how these stereotypes overlapped with those of leaders. To determine the stereotypical attributes for women, mothers, men, and fathers, we followed the procedure used by Ryan et al. (2011) and first performed a series of one-sample *t* tests to determine whether the means of the typicality ratings of the different attributes were significantly above the scale midpoint (i.e., 3) for women, mothers, men, and fathers. However, as we were particularly interested in what drives the parenthood advantage, that is, how the stereotypes of mothers differ from those of women in general, and how the stereotypes of fathers differ from men in general, we also ran a by a series of independent sample *t* tests determining whether typicality ratings were significantly different for women and mothers, or men

and fathers, respectively. We then determined attributes stereotypical of mothers as those that were rated as significantly above the midpoint for mothers and significantly more characteristic of mothers than women, while attributes stereotypical of women were those rated as significantly above the midpoint for women and significantly more characteristic of women than mothers. The same method was used for determining stereotypes of fathers and men. The resulting stereotypes of the different groups are displayed in Table 5. Based on this list, it appears that mothers are seen as more agentic than women in general (e.g., assertive, independent, and self-confident), while fathers are seen as more communal than men in general (e.g., aware of the feelings of others, generous, and sympathetic).

We next investigated how these stereotypes overlapped with leadership stereotypes. As stereotypes of leaders and middle managers were almost identical, we only report the overlap with leader



stereotypes. Thus, we performed a series of one-sample *t* tests and consider all attributes whose ratings were above the midpoint as stereotypical of leaders. We then compared these to the stereotypes of women in general, mothers, men in general, and fathers. The overlapping attributes are displayed in Table 6, which shows that the attributes of mothers and fathers almost all overlap with those of leaders, with the exception of “not conceited about appearance” for mothers and fathers, and “modest” as well as “strong need for security” for fathers only.

### 3.3 | Discussion

In this study, we replicated the TMTM association, the gender penalty for women, as well as the parenthood advantage observed in Study 1. We did not find evidence for the prediction that the parenthood advantage would be more pronounced for fathers than for mothers. It thus appears that gender and parenthood have main effects on stereotypes, but do not interact. Results for middle managers and leaders were almost identical.

The TMTM association was largely driven by male participants, who, compared to female participants, rated women as *less* similar to managers and leaders and men as *more* similar. This pattern is in line with previous findings from the TMTM literature (e.g., Koenig et al., 2011) and more general observations that men's in-group identities are characterized by higher levels of gender dichotomization, such that there is clearer distancing of feminine and masculine characteristics (Bosson & Michniewicz, 2013). However, it should be noted that we did not find these differences in Study 1.

We also explored the content of parenthood stereotypes to investigate *why* parents were seen as more similar to leaders. Interestingly, in contrast to previous work (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2004; Park & Banchevsky, 2018) it appeared that mothers, compared to women in general, were rated as more agentic (e.g., as more assertive, dominant, and independent). In line with previous work (e.g., Park & Banchevsky, 2018) fathers, compared to men in general, were rated as more communal (e.g., as more courteous, helpful, and kind). As a result, the stereotypes of mothers and fathers contain a balance of communal and agentic attributes, similar to stereotypes of leaders. The overlap between fatherhood and leadership stereotypes is particularly interesting, as attributes such as “helpful,” “kind,” and “sympathetic” not only indicate that the roles of fathers have shifted in American society, such that they are no longer perceived primarily as authoritarian breadwinners, but also that leadership stereotypes have changed changing, incorporating more communal aspects.

The attributes for women and men in general, on the contrary, were much more in line with general gender stereotypes, with women being rated as high in communality (e.g., sociable, desire for friendship) and lacking agency (e.g., passive, easily influenced), and men being rated as high in agency (e.g., competitive, high need for achievement), but lacking communality (e.g., selfish, quarrelsome). While we did not measure the positivity of the characteristics, it also appears that the attributes rated as typical of mothers and fathers were overall more positive than those rated as typical of women and men in general.

The finding that fathers, compared to men, were rated as more communal and more positively overall, is in line with previous findings. For example, in a study using a very similar paradigm to the

**TABLE 6** Overlap of gender and parenthood stereotypes with stereotypes of leaders

Women	Mothers	Men	Fathers
Adventurous	Assertive	Adventurous	Aware of feelings of others
Interested in own appearance	Authoritative	Aggressive	Cheerful
Sociable	Decisive	Competitive	Courteous
Sophisticated	Desires responsibility	Forceful	Emotionally stable
Talkative	Direct	Hides emotion	Generous
	Dominant	High need for power	Grateful
	Emotionally stable	Interested in own appearance	Helpful
	Firm	Strong need for achievement	Humanitarian values
	Frank	Strong need for monetary rewards	Intuitive
	Helpful		Kind
	Independent		Knows the way of the world
	Industrious		Leadership ability
	Kind		Self-controlled
	Leadership ability		Self-reliant
	Logical		Sociable
	Not uncomfortable about being aggressive		Sympathetic
	Self-confident		Tactful
	Self-controlled		Understanding
	Self-reliant		Values pleasant surroundings
	Speedy recovery from emotional disturbance		Well informed
	Steady		
	Understanding		

one used here, Park and Banchevsky (2018) found that the father stereotype contained many communal qualities such as being supportive, affectionate, and understanding, while the stereotypes unique to men in general were much more negative and showed a lack of communality (e.g., aggressive, selfish, and pushy). Their data, however, did not indicate that mothers were seen as more agentic than women in general, or that stereotypes of mothers were more positive. They also found that the difference between how fathers and men in general were perceived was larger than the difference between how mothers and women in general were perceived. In our data, this was not the case. These differences could stem from differences in methodologies and data analyses. Perhaps most importantly, the list of attributes used by Park and Banchevsky (2018) was more balanced in terms of positive and negative attributes pertaining to each group that was rated, while we relied on Schein's (1973) list of attributes, which was not developed with parent stereotypes in mind.

#### 4 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

Across two studies, we found evidence that stereotypes of men—regardless of parenthood status—are more in line with stereotypes of leaders relative to stereotypes of women, a clear gender penalty for women. Although findings regarding gender difference were inconsistent across studies, Study 2 suggests that these patterns may be particularly pronounced for male participants. Given that men are overrepresented in decision-making roles, this is particularly concerning.

We found no evidence of a motherhood penalty. Rather, we found that parenthood boosts the fit with leadership stereotypes for both men and women. Thus, rather than a fatherhood advantage, our data indicate a parenthood advantage. Interestingly, this parenthood advantage generally neither decreased nor increased the existing TMTM association. Mothers were still seen as less similar to leaders than fathers, indicating that the gender penalty affects mothers as much as it does women whose parenthood status is not known.

The parenthood advantage seemed to be driven by the fact that leaders are seen as high in agency and communality and that fathers, compared to men in general, are seen as more communal, while mothers, compared to women in general, are seen as more agentic. These patterns suggest not only that leadership stereotypes may have changed and now include more communal attributes, in line with ideas of the female leadership advantage (Eagly & Carli, 2003), but also that current parenthood stereotypes reflect changes in society (e.g., that a large proportion of women are now working) and the emergence of new masculinities in the context of parenthood (i.e., ideas of fathers as caring, rather than authoritarian).

It is also important to note the limitations of these findings. We did not find a motherhood penalty when investigating the fit of stereotypes. This does not, however, indicate that the motherhood penalty does not exist. Instead, it suggests that the motherhood penalty

observed in other research is likely to be driven by factors beyond the descriptive fit of attributes. It may be, for example, be driven by more complex stereotyped traits and attributes not captured here, such as mothers' perceived commitment to family over work. For example, while a mother may be seen as competent and driven (as demonstrated here), it may be assumed that she may prioritize her family over work, and thus, not make use of her competence at work (see Morgenroth & Heilman, 2017).

Moreover, our findings may not necessarily mean that mothers are indeed seen as more suitable for leadership positions as women in general or as equally suitable for workplace management as men in general. Instead, participants in our study may have been reporting their stereotypes of men and women in very different roles or contexts or used different standards to evaluate how agentic and communal they are (see Biernat et al., 1991; Kobrynowicz & Biernat, 1997). For example, participants may have been more likely to think of mothers in more stereotypically feminine contexts, such as managers of homelife, and fathers in more stereotypically masculine contexts, such as in the workplace (see Eagly & Wood, 2012). While this may indeed mean that mothers are seen as firm, self-reliant, and competent at home, it is not clear whether these perceptions would also apply to mothers in the workplace. For example, being a competent mother may be seen to entail different skills than being a competent leader, and thus, high ratings on this attribute may mean different things when rating these two groups. Similarly, being good at caring for children may also been seen as being at odds with being a good manager or leader at work (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). Future research should explore these questions further, for example, by asking participants to rate women, men, fathers, and mothers *at work* specifically. Under such conditions, the motherhood penalty may indeed emerge.

It is also unclear to what extent these findings were driven by the specific attributes we used, particularly given previous findings that showed that stereotypes of women in general and mothers were highly similar (Park & Banchevsky, 2018). Future research should investigate this issue further by including attributes that are specifically associated with parenthood.

Finally, in this study, we asked about women and men in general and compared them to mothers and fathers. It would be interesting to see how these patterns are affected by asking specifically about women and men without children. Research indicates that women without children in particular are seen as lacking communality (e.g., Koropecykj-Cox et al., 2018), which may further reduce their fit with leaders. On the other hand, not having children, particularly when voluntary and permanent, may signal high agency and high commitment to the workplace, and thus, lead to a better fit with leadership stereotypes compared to women in general. Such a study could shed light onto the question whether motherhood is still a mandate for women, but not for men.

Taken together, the results we presented here suggest that gender and managerial stereotypes do not reveal a simple fatherhood advantage nor a motherhood penalty. Rather, stereotypes of parenthood may provide benefits for both mothers and

fathers—suggestive of a parenthood advantage. However, these findings must be examined with caution, in light of the clear evidence of a continued gender penalty for women, and in conjunction with our evidence for the persistence of the TMTM association. Thus, while mothers may experience a motherhood advantage relative to women in general, this advantage only serves to ameliorate the severe gender penalty that they face, bringing them to the same level as men in general. Moreover, while motherhood may be advantageous in terms of stereotype content, such that mothers are viewed as more agentic, we would argue that normative and structural inequalities around the gendered division of labor, particularly in the context of parenthood, will quickly erode any parental advantage that mothers may accrue.

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