

# Communal Male Role Models: How they influence identification with domestic roles and anticipation of future involvement with the family

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## Abstract

The division between work and family is still gendered in our society. While today's women heavily participate in the workforce, men have not begun to participate in household tasks and child care to the same extent, leading to continuing gender imbalances. This seems to have an influence on individuals' self-concepts, their association with work and family, and how they predict their future work-family balance. Furthermore, previous research has shown the influence of career-oriented female role models but has neglected the possible influence of male role models. In this study we investigated whether exposing female and male participants to three different conditions of male exemplars, differing on their work-family balance in lifestyle, from family orientation over a balanced lifestyle to extreme career orientation, would influence their implicit associations with work and family as well as their predictions of their future life. Consistent with our predictions, a preliminary data analysis focusing on female participants showed different anticipations of their future work-family balance when exposed to family oriented male models rather than balanced or career-oriented males.

**Keywords:** *modelling, gender roles, male, division of labour*

Gender-typing of activities is very salient in our society, with children as young as three years of age showing knowledge of which activities are stereotypically masculine and which activities are stereotypically more feminine (Boston & Levy, 1991). Since the 1970s we have experienced considerable changes in gender norms and gender equality in North America and Europe. The

women's rights movements and the entry of women into the workforce have paved the way for the different gender norms we experience today. Although young women today are increasingly more career oriented and obtain a larger percentage of undergraduate degrees than men (Statistics Canada, 2008), expectations for men and women's life course continues to differ.

Remainders of archaic gender hierarchies can still be seen in today's society. For example, female leaders are still perceived as role-incongruent, meaning not typically feminine (Eagly & Karau, 2002), and less than 7% of males are househusbands (Smith, 2007). Although society has come a long way, there is still the need to work towards equality between men and women. True gender equality could enable each individual to make choices and realize their potential independent of any gender specific expectations. Research in psychology can give us important insight into which methods could be used to achieve more equal thinking and actions in individuals. In this study we are interested in the influence of counter-stereotypical primes on participants' traditional gender role adherence.

Generally, men still tend to associate themselves with traditional gender role and norms (Spence & Buckner, 2000). Changing men's adherence to these traditional gender roles, which prevent them from taking part in nurturing and family activities, cannot only be seen as a benefit for women but also for men. Compliance to traditional gender roles might actually deprive males from experiencing alternative roles, such as being a stay-at-home dad, which could be rewarding. Researchers have indeed suggested that fatherhood and fathering activities are beneficial for males' well-being (Dykstra & Keizer, 2009). In this current line of research, we are investigating whether men and women predict that their own life will take a less counter-stereotypical path and whether they will change their own association with family and career when primed with male exemplars that display an alternative, family-oriented lifestyle.

Most research on how men and women relate to family and career matters and how

they manage the division of labour, comes from the fields of the sociology, gender or family studies, and concentrates on describing phenomena. The research from these fields shows that traditional conceptions of husbands being the bread-winners and women taking care of the household are still relevant (Blair and Lichter, 1991). Women and men's attitudes are in line with these stereotypes, with women holding more favourable attitudes towards housework than men do (Blair and Lichter, 1991). These attitudes also seem to be reflected by the actual division of labour in families, with women doing more childcare and housework (Blair and Lichter, 1991). It is worth noting that men's attitudes are more important in determining how the couple actually handles the division of household work (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009). This finding suggests that it is extremely important to find ways to change men's associations with the domestic sphere in order to promote gender equality. This makes the possibility of a simple intervention, such as exposure to role models, especially interesting for shaping male attitudes.

We have already noted the persistent underlying conservative attitudes toward the division of labour within marriages. These attitudes and their consequences have a markedly negative effect on women. One study showed that having a husband who works long hours made wives more likely to quit their jobs, especially when children were present, but this effect wasn't seen the other way around, when the wife worked long hours (Chaa, 2010). Women have also been shown to have less leisure time today compared to 1975, which is not the case for men (Mattingly & Sayer, 2006). This supports the notion that the increasing participation of women in the work force

does not necessarily mean they will do less housework. Instead women often take on a “second shift,” being responsible for the majority of the housework in addition to their paid job (Hochschild, 1989).

This research exemplifies the one-sided trend towards more egalitarian attitudes and actions. We have witnessed a considerable amount of change in women’s attitudes and lives but men have failed to show changes to the same extent. Men are still shown to be less family oriented than women in how they situate themselves in relation to career and family. These differences have been demonstrated when young males and females are asked to imagine their “possible selves,” a concept introduced by Markus and Nurius (1986). An important gender distinction in these forecasts has been found by Diekmann and Brown (2010), where young men predicted themselves to be less involved with family in the distant future than young women did.

This gender difference is also evident on a conceptual level. Conceptualizations of femininity and masculinity are still closely connected to agentic (i.e., expressive) and communal (i.e., instrumental) traits, with women stereotyped as more communal and men as more agentic (Lippa & Conelly, 1990). Interestingly, some researchers have argued in favour of renaming these traits “Dominance and Nurturance” (eg. Spence, 1983) which clarifies the role segregation that underlies these dimensions. Since women are connected to nurturance it may seem evident that this accounts for their traditional adherence to household and family matters, in contrast to the dominant male, who is concerned with work and achievement. Fortunately, masculinity and femininity are now conceptualized as a two-dimensional model, meaning that men and women can possess both feminine and

masculine traits, a concept termed “androgyny” (Bem, 1974; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1974, Spence 1983, Lubinski, Tellegen & Butcher, 1983).

This, however, does not mean that Western society has arrived at a point where men and women equally display and associate themselves with communal and agentic characteristics. In line with the finding that men are still less likely to associate themselves with domestic matters, which are closely connected to femininity (Diekmann & Brown, 2010), research has failed to find a strong change in men’s femininity and masculinity scores over past decades. In a recent examination of gender typing, Spence and Buckner (2000) found that women have developed a stronger identification with agentic traits but men have stayed relatively constant in their identification with agentic and communal traits –meaning that they still identify less with communal traits. This illustrates the one-sided male maintenance and retention of traditional gender roles. We think that this lopsided advancement creates a mismatch between women wanting to participate in the working world and men who are not willing to be more involved in family life. As long as more egalitarian attitudes fail to exist for men, gender equality cannot be achieved – so ultimately we are interested in what could create a change in this imbalance.

One reason for the rigidity of men’s roles may be that masculinity is still seen as more positive and desirable in our society. Masculinity is connected with competence, whereas femininity is perceived to be linked to warmth and expressiveness (Broverman, 1972). A man who engages in feminine, nurturing activities may then be seen as showing weakness. This idea is best reflected by the idea of “precarious

manhood” which describes the finding that manhood, in contrast to womanhood, is a less stable concept. Research shows that there is an underlying belief that manhood, but not womanhood, is a trait that can be lost and is therefore something that has to be proven. It is partly because of this instability of manhood that men still feel threatened when they are associated with femininity or activities deemed feminine (Vandello et al, 2008).

The importance of role models is emphasized by a number of social learning theories that attempt to explain how we acquire gender stereotypical knowledge, attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961). Different models in the social learning perspective are used to explain how society teaches individuals to behave according to a gender standard. For example, social cognitive theory describes how children first learn behaviours through observing models in their environment (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961; Perry & Bussey, 1979). Male and female children learn to behave differently because they learn behaviour appropriate for their gender from models in their environment. Moreover, socialization theory (operant conditioning), applied to the learning of gendered behaviour, holds that men and women differ because they are reinforced by peers and superiors when they display gender-congruent behaviour and punished when they display gender incongruent behaviours (Fagot, 1977). Furthermore, social role theory maintains that females and males develop different characteristics because of the diverging social roles they are assigned to (e.g., domestic roles vs. career roles). These roles require distinct attributes that the individual develops to fit into the role (Eagly & Diekmann, 2000).

There is a large body of evidence giving support to all of these pathways, many of which emphasize the role of models in gender development. These findings help explain why the male gender role appears to be more rigid. Research indicates that various role models encourage males not to show feminine characteristics. These role models come from a variety of sources, including characters within children’s books, actors, teachers or their own parents (Diekmann & Murnen, 2004; Coltrane and Adams, 1997; Raag & Rackliff, 1998; Lamb Easterbrooks, & Holden, 1980). All of these findings suggest that boys may be under special pressure to conform to the models of masculinity and provides an explanation as to why gender-incongruent males may elicit more negative reactions in participants than gender incongruent females.

As I will describe here, there has been a vast amount of research into women’s issues in gender equality. This work has examined how exposure to successful female role models can usher women to adopt more agentic traits and roles and promote women to move into the workforce. One study showed that exposing female participants to exemplars of successful women in a lab setting leads them more easily associate females with leadership attributes on an IAT, marking less stereotypical cognitions (Dasgupta & Asgari 2004). Another study showed that young college women were more likely to believe that they would have a successful career when they had a higher amount and better quality of contact with female professors (Asgari, Dasgupta & Gilbert Cote, 2010). Most recently, a series of studies focusing on the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) has shown that women in these fields exhibit stronger implicit association of self with STEM subjects as well as higher

association of women with these fields after exposure to female experts or after being taught by female math professors (Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger & McManus, 2011).

The value of role model primes also connects to findings that suggest that decisions about the division of labour are often made on an implicit level, but serve to perpetuate gender roles (Wiesman et al, 2008). This may mean that attitudes about what is appropriate for each gender are so deeply internalized that they influence cognition without awareness. This suggests that participants may not consciously recognize the influence a counter-stereotypical male role model can have on their thoughts and behavior. Overall, the previous findings connected to modelling and gender roles leads us to believe that role models may be a promising way to change traditional gender role adherence. A notable point, however, is that previous investigations concentrated on how women benefit from female role models. The male side of this issue has, unfortunately, been largely ignored. We, on the other hand, want to utilize these past research findings to see how communal male role models can influence not only men, but also women.

### ***Hypothesis 1***

We hypothesize that priming male students with examples of men who strongly associate with their families and are happy and successful in their role as temporary stay-at-home dads, will change their beliefs about themselves and their futures. A similarly positive effect of a prime with family oriented male models is possible for females, as the models might open up the possibility of an alternative life style and a thriving career in young women's future. In this study, we wanted to assess how heterosexual male and female students

were influenced by reading about family-oriented males (condition 1), males with an equal balance between work and family (condition 2) or males with a clear career oriented lifestyle (condition 3). We expect effects on the way students implicitly associate themselves with work and family on a Go-No-Go Association Task of implicit associations (GNAT; Nosek & Banaji, 2001), as well as on how students imagine a day in the life of their future self. We think that these profiles could model a counter-stereotypical but positive version of males and therefore be successful in changing attitudes about what lifestyles are appropriate for males as well as females. Hence, our prediction is that male students will be faster to associate themselves with family related words when primed with profiles of family-oriented men than participants who are primed with traditional, career oriented males. Male participants in this condition should also predict more involvement in the family compared to male participants in the other conditions.

Because of the findings related to precarious manhood, which require males to constantly "prove their maleness," we expect that some men may have a threat-like reaction when confronted with examples of communally oriented men and may rate them as less favourable and less like themselves than career oriented men. This presumably serves to distance their self from the counter-stereotypical males. Women, in contrast, would likely not show an adverse reaction to examples of communal men and may even rate them more favourable than men who have little association with family. We believe that it is vital to search for ways that might be able to curtail men's strong adherence to masculine gender-typing, and past research has shown

that role models may be an extremely valuable tool for attempting to do so.

### ***Hypothesis 2***

For women, we envision a different picture. We believe that being primed with family oriented men might free up women to pursue career opportunities. Hence, we predict that women will show the opposite pattern of men when primed with the family-fathers. Specifically, we predict that women will be more likely to associate themselves with career words (implicitly) and to indicate high work involvement when primed with male profiles that are family oriented or keep a work-family balance compared to the career focused primes. The strong evidence for social learning perspectives of gender differences makes us confident that our manipulation of role models differing in career vs. family orientation should have an effect on participant's implicit association with career and family, as well as influence how they picture themselves in the distant future and how they predict work-family balance to turn out in their own lives.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Participants were 81 UBC students (28 males and 53 women) who participated for either course credit or monetary compensation. Fifty nine percent of our participants were East Asian, 22 % Caucasian, 12 % Hispanic, 3% south Asian and 2% Southeast Asian. We are still in the process of collecting data and because our current number of male participants lacks the power to detect any meaningful differences between conditions, this paper will concentrate on reporting the results of the female participants. After excluding participants that indicated

homosexuality in the post-study questionnaire (n = 9) and participants with evident language barriers (n =1) we were left with a sample of 70 participants (48 women and 23 men). Following the exclusions our female data consisted of 17 women in the career condition, 16 women in the balance condition and 15 women in the family condition.

### ***Procedure***

Upon entering the lab, participants read and signed a standard consent form discussing the general study procedures, participant's rights and contact information. Next, participants were given the cover story that we were investigating people's life narratives and the activities they typically engage in. We told them that we were pilot testing some sample narratives to obtain baseline information needed for an upcoming study. Next, we explained that they would do a computer-sorting task to give us a baseline measure of how fast people are generally able to sort stimuli. Finally, they were told that after evaluating the sample narratives, that they would be given the chance to compose their own, future-life narrative.

Our independent variable was a role model prime with three conditions (career, balance and family). Participants were randomly assigned to one of these conditions and asked to read the profiles of five men (the exemplars) and rate them. The five profiles (see Supplementary Material) included the same pictures, education and profession, and number of children in all three conditions, but differed in the amount of career-family balance expressed in the biographical statements. In the career condition the men worked full time and made minimal reference to their family lives, in the balance condition the men had a



thriving career but flexible schedules which allowed them to spend more time with their families, and in the family condition the men were extremely family oriented, taking time off of work to be there for their family and raise small children.

After reading each profile, participants were asked to make ratings of each of the exemplars, presumably to help us pilot test stimuli for another project. Following this task, participants completed the Go/No-Go Association Test (GNAT; Nosek & Banaji, 2001) designed to measure their implicit associations between themselves and career or family. During the final portion of the study, we invited participants to compose a future life narrative for themselves in which we asked them to thoroughly imagine and visualize their future-life 15 years from now. This task was divided into two parts: predicting demographic information and reconstructing a typical day in their future lives.

### Measures

**Profile Ratings.** After reading each of the individual profiles we asked participants to make ratings of how they perceived the person they just read about. First participants rated the exemplar on the 16 item Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1974), which assesses masculine traits (e.g. independent) and feminine traits (e.g. kind) on a five-point scale. To determine whether or not participants were aware of our primary manipulation, we asked them to rate each role model's family-career balance on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 indicating family orientation, 4 indicating balance and 7 indicating career orientation ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Furthermore, participants were asked to indicate how physically attractive ( $\alpha = .83$ ), how attractive as a possible mate ( $\alpha = .88$ ),

how similar to themselves ( $\alpha = .86$ ) and how representative ( $\alpha = .74$ ) they perceived the exemplar. These ratings were made on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 indicating "not at all" and 7 indicating "very much".

**Implicit Measures.** The GNAT (Nosek & Banaji, 2001) we used was modelled after Park, Smith and Corell (2010). In this task, participants had to decide whether stimuli fit into one of two categories presented on top of the screen. We used four (Self, Other; Career, Family) different categories to gauge participants' implicit associations between career and family. Target stimuli included either pictures (see Supplementary Figure 2 for example pictures) related to family or career or words representing self (e.g., me, mine, my) or other (e.g., they, them, theirs). Participants completed four separate pairing blocks (self-career, self-family, other-career and other family) of categorizations with 96 randomly ordered trials each. The categories "Self" or "Other" were each paired with either "Family" or "Career" in a counterbalanced order between participants. The stimuli were presented with a 500-ms response window and an inter-stimulus interval of 150-ms (as in Park et al., 2010). Categorizations were made by either pressing the spacebar if the item did not fit in to one of the two target categories ("Go") or not acting ("No-Go") if the item did not fit into either category. We then measured the speed and the accuracy that participants made these categorizations. The GNAT task works off the assumption that participants will be slower or make more errors when the two categories presented together contradict their own implicit associations (Park, Smith & Corell, 2010). In principle, someone who, for example, has a strong association of self to career should then be better able to categorize stimuli

when the categories self and career are presented together than when the categories self and family are presented together. The dependent variable for the GNAT (d-prime) is calculated for each block (i.e. associative pairing) by subtracting a participant's probability of showing false alarm responses (pressing the space bar if the stimuli does not fit) from their probability of getting a correct hit (pressing the spacebar when the stimuli does fit in one of the categories). In turn, a more negative value indicates more error and, therefore, a weaker association between the two concepts.

**Future Self Predictions.** The measure of future self-predictions consisted of two parts. First participants filled out a questionnaire that asked them to predict the demographic characteristics of their future life. These questions were largely associated with anticipated career-family balance such as marital status, occupation, number of children and time spent with family. A number of questions pertained to the likelihood of certain life events and lifestyle in the future. Questions included the likelihood of having a spouse, having children, being the primary economic provider and being the primary caregiver for their family. We also asked participants how satisfied and successful they anticipated to be in terms of their family, career and overall life. These questions were answered on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 indicating "*not at all*" and seven indicating "*very much*". Additionally, participants had to predict which activities would take up what percentage of time in their day as well as their spouse's day.

To aid participants in predicting a day in their future life we used a modified version of the day reconstruction method

(Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz & Stone, 2004). This method provided participants with a framework that divided their day in three large blocks (waking to noon; noon to 6 pm; and 6pm to bedtime) with a number of sub-episodes. For each sub-episode participants were asked to provide a topical name and then a more detailed description of what they did during this period of time. The predictions participants made were coded by two coders focusing on how much time participants anticipated working, taking part in personal activities or family activities, or other activities such as commuting. Time spent on family activities was furthermore split up into time spent with kids, doing housework, being with the whole family or spending exclusive time with a spouse.

## Results

### **Analytic Strategy**

To analyze our data I used one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) to test the significance of the effects of condition (Family, Balance and Career) on our primary dependent variables. Subsequently, I used the Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) to examine pairwise comparisons between the different conditions. Because we are not yet done collecting data for this study and we are aiming for a larger sample size, especially for males, but female participants as well, I will present some promising trends in the data in addition to significant results. Furthermore, as stated above, the extremely limited power due to the low number of male participants has led me to concentrate on reporting female participants' data in this paper.



**Manipulation Check**

A one way ANOVA run on our manipulation check ( $F(2,67) = 104.54, p < .001$ ) and a subsequent pairwise comparison indicated that participants gave significantly different ratings for Family ( $M = 3.13$ ), Balance ( $M = 4.07$ ) and Career ( $M = 5.23$ ) condition (all  $p$ 's  $< .001$ ). These significant mean differences indicate that participants, as expected, perceived our family-oriented exemplars as family oriented, our balanced exemplars as balanced and our career-oriented exemplars as career oriented. Notably, however, we can see that the ratings for family and career condition were not at the far end of the family-career spectrum.

**Profile Ratings**

First, we tested how female participants rated the profiles of the role-model primes they saw at the beginning of the experiment. As predicted, there was a significant effect of condition on perceived masculinity of the exemplars,  $F(2, 45) = 11.15, p < .001$ . Pairwise comparisons showed that masculinity ratings for the career condition ( $M = 32.41$ ) were significantly higher than ratings for the family condition ( $M = 26.51$ ) and the balance condition ( $M = 26.90; p < .001$ ), whereas masculinity ratings in the balance and family condition were extremely similar to each other ( $p = .77, ns$ ).

Furthermore, there was a significant effect of condition on perceived femininity,  $F(2, 45) = 5.59, p = .001$ . Pairwise comparison revealed that femininity ratings in the career condition ( $M = 25.14$ ) were significantly lower than femininity ratings in the family ( $M = 29.14$ ),  $p = .01$  and balance condition ( $M = 31.88$ ),  $p < .001$ . We see here that males in the career condition were perceived as less feminine compared to the other two conditions.

Interestingly, participants reported no significant differences between conditions in perceived similarity of the exemplars to themselves ( $p = .50$ ). There was, however, an effect of condition on average representativeness of the exemplars,  $F(2, 45) = 4.58, p = .02$ . Participants perceived the exemplars in the balance condition ( $M = 4.31$ ) to be significantly more representative than the family oriented exemplars ( $M = 3.64$ ),  $p < .01$  and marginally more representative than the exemplars from the career condition ( $M = 3.91$ ),  $p = .09$ . This suggests that participants felt, on average, that the males trying to keep a work-family balance were most representative of the males they encountered in everyday life.

Although participants rated the males differently on several dimensions, e.g., not perceiving them as equally masculine and feminine in the three conditions, these differences were not reflected in how physically attractive participants perceived the exemplars, as we found no difference between conditions ( $p = .31$ ). Instead, we found that participants responded differently to the exemplars as possible mates,  $F(2, 45) = 3.63, p = .04$ . Pairwise comparisons indicated that female participants who were exposed to the career oriented males ( $M = 4.31$ ) judged them to be significantly less attractive potential mates than the male exemplars in the family ( $M = 5.31$ ),  $p = .02$ , and the balance condition ( $M = 5.29$ ),  $p = .03$ .

**Implicit Associations**

When we conducted the same one-way ANOVA on participants' implicit associations of self vs. other and family vs. career, the only effect of condition we observed was a marginal effect on self and family associations,  $F(2, 45) = 2.41, p = .10$ . A follow up pairwise comparison analyses showed

that women in the family condition were actually significantly faster at associating self with family stimuli ( $M = -0.02$ ) compared to women in the balance condition ( $M = -0.186$ ),  $p = .03$ . Recall that a mean  $d$ -prime value closer to zero indicated faster association of the two concepts than a value further away from zero. These results may suggest that it took women longer to associate themselves with family when they were exposed to the balanced male role models than when exposed to the career oriented role models.

### Future Life Predictions

Next, we examined whether participants' predictions of future demographic characteristics differed between conditions. In line with our predictions, we found a significant effect of condition on how likely female participants expect that they will be the primary economic caregiver 15 years in the future,  $F(2,45) = 4.86$ ,  $p = .01$ , see Figure 1. Pairwise comparisons showed that there was a significant difference in likelihood that female participants will be the breadwinner between the Balanced ( $M = 2.81$ ) and the Family ( $M = 4.47$ ) condition,  $p < .001$ . Furthermore there was a near marginal difference between the Balance and the Career condition ( $M = 3.65$ ),  $p = .11$  as well as between the Career and the Family condition,  $p = .12$ . This data suggests that females might be more likely to want to engage in a career when confronted with the family-oriented males as opposed to the career-oriented males. Women exposed to the balanced condition, however, showed lower career anticipation than women exposed to the other two conditions.

Moreover, although the initial ANOVA was not significant ( $p = .20$ ), the data indicated that females in the balance condition predict a marginally lower mean

percentage of their spouse's time spent with family matters ( $M = 22.36\%$ ) compared to females in the family condition ( $M = 28.87\%$ ),  $p < .10$ . This means that females in the balance condition actually predict lower spousal family involvement.

In addition, despite a non-significant overall ANOVA ( $p = .21$ ) we observed a marginal difference between career ( $M = 6.29$ ) and balance ( $M = 5.81$ ) condition of participants' anticipation of satisfaction with their job in the future,  $p = .09$ . This suggests that women may anticipate more job satisfaction when they are exposed to examples of career oriented men as opposed to being exposed to more family oriented male exemplars.

The only difference between conditions that appeared in the predictions of a typical future day was in how many hours on average female participants anticipated spending at work. As the overall ANOVA yielded non-significant results,  $p = .21$ , pairwise comparisons showed that females may anticipate having more time when they were confronted with career males ( $M = 7.59$  hours) than when they were confronted with the exemplars in the balance ( $M = 6.54$ ),  $p = .09$ , and the family condition ( $M = 6.45$ ),  $p = .06$ .

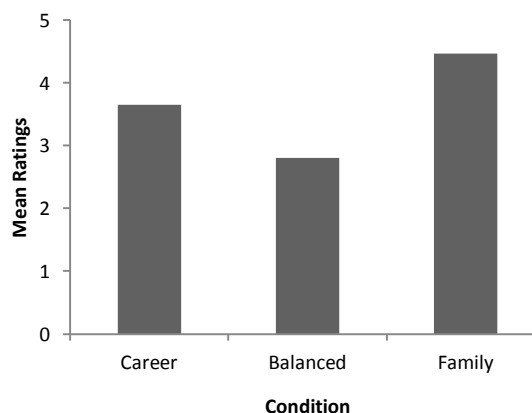


Figure 1. Female participants' reported likelihood of being the primary economic provider.

## Discussion

Although preliminary, these data suggest that our manipulation had the hypothesized effect with participants perceiving the exemplars' career-family balance in the different conditions as we had planned. Secondly, women's perceptions of the exemplars seemed to be shaped by the exemplars' orientation towards career or family. In particular, masculinity and femininity ratings, which showed higher masculinity and lower femininity in the career condition, are consistent with social role theory that predicts that females and males are perceived feminine when they are assigned female roles and as masculine when they are assigned male typical roles (Eagly, Wood & Diekmann, 2000). This also supports the notion of precarious manhood, as we saw that females assigned males more masculine quality when they proved themselves through living traditionally masculine career-oriented lifestyles (Vandello et al, 2008). Participants also perceived the role models from the balance condition as the most representative of the average male population, while they indicated preferring the family-oriented males as potential mates.

The finding that was most supportive of our predictions was the finding that exposing female participants to male role models had an effect on how they viewed their future life related to family and career. Interestingly, females reported a significantly higher likelihood of being the primary economic provider when they were confronted with family oriented males as opposed to males that were trying to keep a work-family balance. This finding is in line with our prediction that females should be more likely to anticipate a thriving work-life when they come in contact with family

oriented male models. It is however, somewhat surprising that there was no significant difference between female participants' anticipated career involvement in the career condition and the other conditions. In fact, women in the balance condition appeared to predict the lowest likelihood of becoming the primary economic provider for their family. This somewhat unexpected reaction of women was also reflected by the marginally higher anticipated time spent with career and satisfaction with career that females reported in the career condition as opposed to the balance condition.

Furthermore, the finding that females had higher anticipated time spent in the career condition connects to the idea that women perceive family oriented males as more attractive potential mates than the career oriented males, which may suggest that there is, today, a general desire among females to have a successful career. This is easily explained by the higher status our society reserves for work outside the home (e.g., Fergusson, 1991). A tendency to discard males who are not willing to participate in family duties from the pool of potential mates may also explain why females confronted with career oriented males do not anticipate a significantly lower probability of the being the breadwinner. Females that read about career oriented males may actually have had a defiance-like reaction and dissociate from these males as models of potential partners. This may explain why these women actually show the desire for more career involvement. Overall, our data would suggest that young female university students already show a significant affinity towards focusing on career matters. This is amplified by being exposed to the possibility of a house-husband but not necessarily reversed by

being exposed to career-focused men – as these men are perceived as unattractive partners.

The finding that females presented with the exemplars of men who strive for a work-family tradeoff anticipate lower probability of being the breadwinner of their future-family than females in the other condition is somewhat counterintuitive. One speculation to explain women's unexpected reaction to being presented with the balanced exemplars might be that these exemplars may have represented a realistic tradeoff for women, which may have lead them to actually anticipate shared duties, which would require them to still be involved with their families. These balanced males may very well be seen as the embodiment of modern conceptualizations of equal partnership. The exemplars might have, therefore, made a compromise between career and family, and seem like an attractive and realistic option. In such a partnership, none of the partners would actually be the primary breadwinner, which is reflected by our participants' answers.

Moreover, our data show marginal effects that point to lower anticipated job satisfaction and lower anticipated percentage of the spousal day spent with family for females in the balance condition. This could suggest that our participants fear higher work-family strain and stressful experiences resulting from the vision of a dual-earner couple. Females might be especially aware of the notion of the "second shift" (Hochschild, 1989). Research shows that working mothers as well as fathers are at risk of feeling strain from this situation (Bakker, Demerouti & Dollard, 2008). In fact, trying to be highly involved with both work and family can create interference of work with family life and vice versa (Byron, 2005). This is especially true

for employed mothers of young children, who can experience guilt with regard to their employment (Elvin-Novak, 1999). Our participants' unexpected response to the balance condition could then represent a concern about the hardships of combining work and family duties in their future.

Although these findings are intriguing, there are some limitations of this study that should be noted. Specifically concerns about external validity and cross-cultural validity are applicable. Our study aims to approximate the effect of role models through a simple lab procedure. It is questionable, however, whether the brief exposure to profiles in a sterile laboratory setting can substitute for real world contacts. If anything, one would expect the effects of real-life role models to be stronger on the basis of authenticity and length of contact. In addition, although our sample contains a considerable percentage of Caucasians and East Asian participants, the population is still limited to undergraduate students at a North American university and therefore cannot adequately address cultural variability in the influence of gender role modeling.

The most important next step in this research would be the continuation of data collection on this project in order to obtain greater power to make statistically significant conclusion about the effects of our role model prime on females *and* males. As participant's reactions to the balance condition seem somewhat unexpected, establishing a fourth condition could be a way to gain a better control measure. Such condition would likely consist of giving participants a short reading about a non-relevant topic instead of the role-model prime, to find out what people's associations and future life predictions look like at baseline.

As our research shows some promising trends pertaining to the influence male models can have on females' future life expectations, we believe that these findings should be further pursued. Research could explore the impact of family-oriented male models on males and female in other settings. As our data suggest that work or family-orientation of male role models have an effect on females anticipation of a breadwinner role in their future, it might be interesting to see whether such role model effect are present in non-lab settings. For example, we could explore how parents' gender stereotypical beliefs affect their children's gender related cognition, especially on an implicit level. In connection to the data I presented in this paper, it would be intriguing to see would be whether family-oriented or even stay-at home fathers influence their daughters to be more eager to have a career and associate themselves with more with work.

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## Supplementary Material



**Figure 1.** Profile picture for profile 1.

### **Profile 1 – Career condition**

Christopher Berry went to The University of Alberta and received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Chemical Engineering. He started out in engineering design at Dow Chemical, a large chemical company where he designed equipment and processes that were used to make chemicals such as plastics and chlorine. In his work he focused on creating a better and more biodegradable form of packaging for food products. Christopher has found this very fulfilling, and despite the amount he has to put into his research, Chris knows he is making a valuable contribution to the environment. He never loses interest in what he is doing, as he feels that all of his hard work will eventually pay off. It is this persistence that makes him such a good chemical engineer. Chris is also married and has a young son.

### **Profile 1- Balance condition**

Christopher Berry went to The University of Alberta and received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Chemical Engineering. Chris works as an engineer at Dow Chemical, a large chemical company where he designs equipment and processes that are used to make chemicals such as plastics and chlorine. In addition to his success at work Chris maintains a healthy home life and enjoys spending his time off work with his son and wife. Chris says: "since my son Nathan was born, I try to stick to a regular schedule and go home early to spend time with my family." Although Chris loves being an Engineer and is happy at his workplace he is equally eager to spend time with his family.

**Profile 1 – Family condition**

Christopher Berry went to The University of Alberta and received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Chemical Engineering. He started out in engineering design at Dow Chemical, a large chemical company where he designed equipment and processes that were used to make chemicals such as plastics and chlorine. He was very successful within his field, and well liked by his colleagues. However, Chris's priorities changed when his first son, Nathan, was born. Since then, he has decided to take paternity leave to care for Nathan, while his wife goes back to work to advance her career and support their family. Chris really loves taking care of his son and he is planning to return to work once Nathan is ready to attend kindergarten.

**A.**



**B.**



**Figure 2.** **A.** Example of a family-related stimulus. **B.** Example of a work-related stimulus.