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The Prototypical Parent Personality

Madeline R. Lenhausen[1], Christopher J. Hopwood[2], Manon A. van Scheppingen[3], Wiebke Bleidorn[2]

[1] *Department of Psychology, University of California, Davis, Davis, CA, USA.* **[2]** *Department of Psychology, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland.* **[3]** *Department of Developmental Psychology, Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands.*

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Corresponding Author: Madeline R. Lenhausen, 1 Shields Ave, Davis, CA 95616, USA. E-mail: mlenhausen@ucdavis.edu

Supplementary Materials: Data, Materials, Preregistration [see Index of Supplementary Materials]

Abstract

What personality traits characterize a typical parent? The purpose of this pre-registered study was to generate consensus-based Big Five personality prototypes of a typical father and mother through the eyes of 226 expecting parents and 281 nonparents (Total N = 507). We found that a prototypical father's and mother's personalities can be described with high levels of agreement as characterized by high levels of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The prototypical mother profile is higher in extraversion, the agreeableness item: sympathy/warmth, and conscientiousness and lower in emotional stability compared to the prototypical father profile. Compared to nonparents, mothers' self-rated levels of emotional stability and extraversion were more similar to the parent prototype. We found little evidence that parents' self-reported personality aligns more with their beliefs about a prototypical parent's personality after the transition to parenthood. Discussion focuses on personality prototypes and social role expectations during the transition to parenthood.

Keywords

personality, Big Five, parents, personality prototypes, parenthood, social roles

Relevance Statement

Strong consensus in participants' beliefs of a parent's personality, regardless of their familiarity with the role, suggests that people may have shared expectations for many social roles which may in turn guide their behavior in these roles.

Key Insights

- People agree on the personality profile of a prototypical parent.
- The parent prototype is characterized by high emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.
- There are differences between how people see fathers and mothers.
- Expecting parents' personality profile is similar to the parent prototype.
- We found no evidence for trait changes in the direction of the parent prototype after the transition to parenthood.

The archetype of a warm, loving, and dependable mother has existed throughout time and across cultures (Hrdy, 1999). To the degree that beliefs about a prototypical parent's personality are valid role expectations, they may provide a useful template for how to think, feel, and behave when adopting this role (Roberts & Wood, 2006). In other words, new parents may experience unique pressures to think, feel, and behave in ways reflected in the personality prototype associated with the parent role; and the degree to which they approximate this prototype may have implications for their psychological adjustment during this life transition.

In this pre-registered study, we examined two overarching questions concerning the 1) nature and 2) implications of people's beliefs about parental personality prototypes. Understanding the nature of the parent prototype provides information about role expectations and their validity. Moreover, beliefs in a parent prototype may be one of the mechanisms relevant to the social investment principle (SIP), i.e., the idea that the age-graded adoption of social roles is a catalyst for personality development (Roberts et al., 2005).

We used a consensus-based rating approach to generate Big Five personality trait prototypes of a typical father and mother through the eyes of expecting parents and nonparents (Bleidorn et al., 2020; Lynam & Widiger, 2001). Specifically, we used aggregates of each individual Big Five trait rating to form overall personality prototypes for a typical parent. We investigated differences in consensus and mean ratings of the parent prototype across parenthood status and genders. We then investigated the implications of these parent prototypes by testing whether new parents' beliefs are related to their personality development during the transition to parenthood. Specifically, we examined whether parents' personality traits aligned more with their beliefs about a prototypical parent's personality after the transition to parenthood.

What Is the Nature of People's Beliefs About Parental Personality Prototypes?

People have fairly specific personality beliefs about the typical personality associated with a variety of social roles and categories (Bleidorn et al., 2018). Such beliefs can be described in terms of the Big Five traits emotional stability, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (John et al., 2008). The parent role has been often associated with psychological maturity, depicted in the Big Five traits as high levels of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Bleidorn, 2015; Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2007). Consistent with this, parents tend to be characterized as relatively more emotionally stable, agreeable, and conscientious than, for example, teenagers or college students (Roberts & Wood, 2006). There is evidence to suggest that such beliefs are somewhat valid as indicated by self-reported personality differences between parents and nonparents. For example, Hutteman and colleagues (2013) found that parents rate themselves higher in agreeableness compared to nonparents. Other studies found that parents score higher in extraversion and conscientiousness and lower in openness compared to nonparents (Jokela et al., 2011; van Scheppingen et al., 2016); and that these trait levels were associated with more effective parenting behavior (Prinzie et al., 2009).

To date, no research has investigated people's beliefs about the prototypical parent personality. Generating a consensus-based parent prototype could allow scholars to connect this prototype across a variety of contexts as well as to other published personality prototypes such as the "healthy personality profile" (Bleidorn et al., 2020) or maladaptive profiles (Lynam & Widiger, 2001). Moreover, the existence of a consensual parent prototype would provide evidence that people have specific and shared expectations concerning the parent role.

However, there may be systematic differences in the generated parent prototype depending on both rater and target. That is, certain demographic variables may influence peoples' beliefs about a prototypical parent. With regard to our data, two questions stand out: Does it matter if the rater is a parent or not? Does gender matter?

Agreement Between Parents and Nonparents

Parents and people without children differ systematically in a variety of socioeconomic, social, and psychological characteristics (Denissen et al., 2019; Jokela et al., 2009). Thus, parenthood status may influence how individuals rate the personality of a prototypical parent.[1] A new parent may be acutely aware of the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that characterize the demands associated with parenthood compared to nonparents who are less concerned with this role. In contrast, nonparents may rely more on a general

1) This is a deviation from our pre-registration. We did not pre-register this hypothesis because we included data from the nonparent sample at a later stage of the data analyses.

stereotype of a parent, and thus provide less nuanced ratings (Chan et al., 2012; Church et al., 2003). This reliance on shared stereotypes would result in higher agreement among nonparents compared to expecting parents who may have a more nuanced window into the personality traits of parents. Together, these processes would lead to more heterogeneity and thus less agreement among parents compared to nonparents.

Agreement Between Men and Women

Across measures, samples, and cultures, men tend to score higher on emotional stability and openness, whereas women score higher on neuroticism and agreeableness (Costa et al., 2001). Moreover, men and women tend to have different roles in child rearing (Katz-Wise et al., 2010), with mothers more often responsible for the well-being of the child, and fathers more often in the role of protector and provider (Nyström & Öhrling, 2004). Thus, men and women may differ in their ratings of a prototypical parent's personality and people's beliefs about a prototypical mother's personality may differ from that of a father. Unfortunately, in our study design, gender of rater and target were confounded such that men rated the personality of a prototypical father and women rated the personality of a prototypical mother. We thus explored gender differences across raters and targets.

Is the Parent Prototype Valid?

To the degree that we find sufficient agreement in ratings of a prototypical parent's personality, an important question is whether the parent profile offers a valid representation of parents' actual personality traits as measured via self- or other-report. Similarity between parents' actual personality and the prototypical parent personality would add to the criterion validity of this prototype and make comparisons across various personality prototypes more meaningful. To begin to examine the construct validity of the average parent prototype generated in this study, we compared parents' and nonparents' self-rated personality traits to this prototype. To the degree that the prototype ratings reflect valid representations of parents' actual personality traits, we expected parents' self-rated personality traits to be more similar to the average parent prototype than nonparents' self-rated personality traits.

What Are the Implications of Parents' Beliefs About a Prototypical Parent?

Parenthood is associated with a host of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive demands all of which may, over time, translate into broader personality trait changes (Hutteman et al., 2014). Although existing research provided little evidence for mean-level changes in Big Five personality traits following the transition to parenthood, there is a large body

of evidence for significant individual differences in trait change during this life transition (Galdiolo & Roskam, 2014; Lenhausen et al., 2021; van Scheppingen et al., 2016).

Individual differences in personality change may in part reflect individual differences in new parents' beliefs about a prototypical parent's personality. People's beliefs about a prototypical parents' personality may guide their thoughts, feelings, and behavior, particularly when they become parents. In other words, changes in parents' personality traits may reflect their somewhat idiosyncratic beliefs rather than unifying normative pressures. To the degree that new parents' traits change in the direction of their idiosyncratic beliefs, their self-rated personality traits may be more similar to their individual ratings of a prototypical parent's personality traits after compared to before the transition to parenthood.

The Present Study

In this pre-registered (Lenhausen et al., 2020a) study, we examined the nature and implications of people's beliefs about a prototypical parent's personality using a rater-consensus approach and data from parents and nonparents. In what follows, we list our pre-registered and additional three not pre-registered hypotheses (please note that we present the hypotheses in a different order than in the pre-registration, see Table 1).

We predicted the prototypical parent to be characterized by high levels of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (H1). We expected to find high levels of agreement for the traits of a prototypical parent (H2a), with stronger agreement in ratings of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness than in extraversion and openness (H2b). We explored differences among parents' and nonparents' agreement (H3a) and ratings (H3b) of a prototypical parent's personality. We also predicted gender differences in mean-level ratings, with fathers rated higher in levels of emotional stability (H4a) and mothers rated higher in levels of agreeableness (H4b). Using the generated personality traits of a prototypical parent, we examined the validity of these ratings by comparing parents' and nonparents' self-rated personality traits to the average parent prototype. We expected parents' self-rated personality traits to be more similar to the generated parent prototype than nonparents' self-rated personality traits (H5).

Lastly, we initially examined two potential implications of beliefs about a prototypical parent in a sample of expecting first-time parents. First, we tested whether parents' self-reported personality traits aligned more closely with their parent prototype ratings after the transition to parenthood (H6). Second, we aimed to examine whether congruence between parents' beliefs and self-rated personality was associated with their levels of self-esteem. However, the nature of the data and design of our study precluded a rigorous test of this hypothesis. We therefore moved the analyses related to this hypothesis to the Supplementary Materials.

Table 1

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research questions	Hypotheses	Pre-registration
Nature of people's beliefs about parental personality prototypes		
1) What personality traits characterize the prototypical parent?	H1) The prototypical parent will have high levels of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.	H3; Confirmatory
2) Do people agree about the personality traits of the parent prototype?	H2a) There will be relative agreement about the personality trait levels of a prototypical parent for all traits	H1; Confirmatory
	H2b) There will be stronger agreement in prototypical parent ratings of traits associated with maturation than traits that are not associated with maturation.	H2; Confirmatory
3) Does it matter if the rater is a parent or not?	H3a) There will be differences among parents' and nonparents' agreement of a prototypical parent's personality	Exploratory
	H3b) There will be differences among parents' and nonparents' prototype ratings of a typical parent's personality	Exploratory
4) Does gender matter?	H4a) The prototypical father will be rated as having higher levels of emotional stability compared to the prototypical mother	Exploratory
	H4b) The prototypical mother will be rated as having higher levels of agreeableness compared to the prototypical father	Exploratory
5) Is this parent prototype valid?	H5) Parents' self-rated personality traits will be more similar to the generated parent prototypes than nonparents' personality traits	Exploratory
Implications of parents' beliefs about a prototypical parent		
6) Do parents' personality traits align more with their beliefs after the transition to parenthood?	H6) Parents will become more similar to their perceptions of a prototypical parent after the transition to parenthood.	H6; Confirmatory

Note. The Pre-Registration column refers to the original hypothesis number in the pre-registration. Exploratory hypotheses were not pre-registered. Hypothesis 7 was moved to the Supplementary Materials.

Method

Sample

Data for this study came from the Transition to Parenthood Study, a 4-wave longitudinal study of first-time parents and couples without children (Lenhausen et al., 2021; van Scheppingen et al., 2018). Participants were in a romantic relationship and between 19 and 45 years old. All participants answered questionnaires at 4 measurement occasions (Wave 1–4). First-time fathers and mothers completed an online survey 6 weeks before the expected birth date of their child and when their child was 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months old. Nonparents followed the same timeline (i.e., with 6-month time-intervals).

The parent sample consisted of 248 individuals (53.3% female) at Wave 1, comprising 110 couples and 28 individuals who participated without their partner. Almost all parents were in paid employment (95.8%). Most parents (90.8%) completed tertiary education (i.e., 34.3% vocational education, 38.0% higher professional education, 27.8% academic higher education). The nonparent sample consisted of 294 individuals (51.4% female) at Wave 1, comprising 140 couples and 14 individuals who participated without their partner. Most nonparents were in paid employment (71.4%). A majority of nonparents (76.6%) completed tertiary education (i.e., 24.7% vocational education, 28.3% higher professional education, 47.1% academic higher education).

For the present study, we used data from the first 2 assessment waves and included all participants who completed the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) of a prototypical parent and the first wave of the Big Five Inventory (BFI) self-ratings (Total N = 507, 55% female, M_{age} = 28.14, SD_{age} = 4.55)[2]. For the parent sample, we only included participants who completed the aforementioned measures for a total of N = 226, 58% female, M_{age} = 30.16, SD_{age} = 3.73. The nonparent subsample consisted of all nonparents who completed the measures for a total of N = 281, 52% female, M_{age} = 26.49, SD_{age} = 4.51. Additional information on the parent and nonparent subsamples can be found in Table S9 of the Supplementary Materials. Data, code, supplementary material, and the codebook containing additional recruitment information, descriptives, and variable information can be found at Lenhausen et al., 2020b.[3] The authors grant permission to reproduce material from other sources. Ethical approval has been received from the Institutional Review Board at Tilburg University, and this study conforms to recognized standards. Two previous studies have used data from this study (Lenhausen et al., 2021;

2) This difference in sample size from the pre-registered sample size is due to our addition of the nonparent sample into the study.

3) This is with exception to the data of an independent Dutch sample we obtained from a colleague to test H1, which is not shared publicly due to adhering to the informed consent.

van Scheppingen et al., 2018), none of these studies focused on questions related to the prototypical parent personality.

Measures

Prototypical Parent Personality (TIPI)

Prototypical parent ratings were measured using a modified version of the Dutch Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling et al., 2003; Hofmans et al., 2008), which consists of 10 items, two per Big Five domain. Participants rated a prototypical mother and father ("I see a typical mother/father as:") at Wave 1. All items were answered on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = disagree strongly – 7 = agree strongly). For the total sample, correlations between the two items measuring the same trait ranged from .00 for agreeableness to .49 for emotional stability (Median r = .31). Consistent with previous research that found similarly low consistencies for the TIPI agreeableness scale (Garofalo et al. 2019), further analyses indicated different patterns across the two agreeableness items (i.e., "critical/quarrelsome" and "sympathetic/warm"). We thus deviated from the pre-registration and reported results for each agreeableness item separately, and relegated results for the composite agreeableness score to the Supplementary Materials.

Self-Rated Personality (BFI)

We used the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI; John et al., 2008) to assess the Big Five at Waves 1 and 2. All items were answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree – 5 = completely agree). At Wave 1, omega hierarchical (ω_h) ranged from .50 for agreeableness to .73 for emotional stability. For better interpretability when making comparisons between the TIPI and BFI, we transformed the 5-point scale into a 7-point scale using linear transformation.[4] For mean-level descriptives of self-rated BFI traits, refer to Supplementary Materials or Lenhausen et al. (2021).

Analyses

We conducted all analyses in R (R Core Team, 2018). We tested relative and differential consensus in prototypical parent trait ratings using the packages car version 3.0-5 and multilevel version 2.6 (Bliese, 2016; Fox & Weisberg, 2019). We handled missing data using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation. We used Benjamini-Hochberg correction to correct for multiple testing and only interpreted p-values equal to or lower than .01 as significant.

4) Linear transformations: Y = 1.5 * x – 0.5, where 'x' represents the specific data point to be transformed and 'Y' represents the outcome of the original data point into the transformed data point. For more details, see the Supplementary Materials.

To test H1, we generated an overall Big Five prototype for a typical parent and separate prototypes for a typical mother and father using parent and nonparent TIPI ratings in a variable-centered approach. To gauge this profile, we obtained data from an independent reference sample of 261 Dutch participants, aged 19–45, who provided self-ratings of their personality using the TIPI (see Garofalo et al., 2019). This analysis was requested in review and allowed us to compare the TIPI parent prototype to an average TIPI self-rated profile obtained from a relevant comparison group of young adults. We used independent *t*-tests to examine whether the mean-level prototypical parent ratings of each of the Big Five traits significantly differed from self-ratings of the corresponding trait, with particular focus on emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

To test H2 and H3, we examined agreement among different groups of raters for each Big Five trait rating using the r_{wg} coefficient. This coefficient has been used in past research to assess consensus in ratings and reflects the proportion of observed variance over the variance in random ratings with higher values indicating greater agreement among raters (Bleidorn et al., 2020; James et al., 1984). Specifically, it is the reduction in error when comparing variance in participants' ratings to variance in ratings as if they were completely random. It can be quantified by calculating the proportion of observed variance from the participants over the variance in ratings assumingly random and then subtracting this from 1. We interpreted $r_{wg} < .30$ as poor agreement and $r_{wg} > .50$ as moderate to strong agreement (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). We expected all coefficients to be > .30 (H2a) but predicted greater consensus for emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness compared to openness and extraversion (H2b). We further explored differences in agreement and mean-level ratings among parents and nonparents (H3a, H3b).

We examined gender differences across parent prototypes to test H4. Specifically, we used independent *t*-tests to compare mean-level trait ratings between men's ratings of a prototypical father and women's ratings of a prototypical mother, with a particular focus on differences in emotional stability (H4a) and agreeableness (H4b).

We computed squared differences between parents' and nonparents' self-rated traits and the overall, average parent prototype and used independent *t*-tests to examine whether parents' personality traits were more closely matched to a prototypical parent's personality than nonparents' personality traits (H5). We then tested whether the squared differences between parents' self-rated BFI trait ratings and their own individual ratings of a prototypical parent decreased (H6) from Wave 1 (pre-transition) to Wave 2 (post-transition).

Results

Attrition Analyses

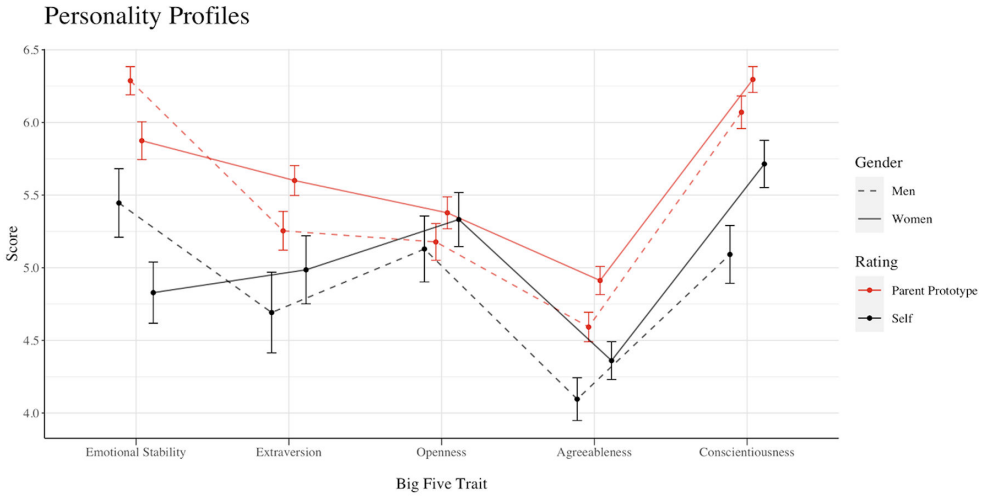
Parents who dropped out scored significantly lower in agreeableness, $d = 0.33$; $M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.44$; $M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.45$; $t(90.96) = 2.16$, $p = .03$. Dropouts and continuing participants did not differ in any other traits, age, or gender.

What Personality Traits Characterize the Prototypical Parent?

Figure 1 depicts the personality profiles of a prototypical mother and father in comparison to the self-rated personality profiles of a reference sample. Means and standard deviations for each of the parent prototypical trait ratings are presented in Table S2 of the Supplementary Materials. Supporting H1, when compared to the average self-rated personality profiles of the reference sample, the prototypical parent scored higher in emotional stability, $d = 0.85$; $t(408.58) = 10.15$, both agreeableness items: "critical/quarrelsome", $d = 0.27$; $t(602.57) = 3.79$, and "sympathetic/warm", $d = 0.75$; $t(402.12) = 8.84$, and conscientiousness, $d = 0.84$; $t(411.57) = 10.02$, at $p < .001$. Moreover, the prototypical parent also scored higher in extraversion, $d = 0.51$; $t(373.07) = 5.86$. There was no significant difference between the reference sample's self-ratings and parent prototype ratings of openness, $d = 0.05$; $t(432.78) = 0.58$, $p = .56$.

Figure 1

TIPI Big Five Personality Trait Scores of a Prototypical Father and Mother and Self-Rated TIPI Big Five Traits Derived From a Reference Sample of Dutch Young Adults



Note. $N = 261$, $M_{age} = 25.03$. The y-axis shows raw scores. Scores are staggered left to right for interpretive clarity.

Do People Agree About the Personality Traits of a Parent Prototype?

Supporting H2a, we found strong agreement for all traits of a prototypical parent (r_{wg} ≥ .75, see Table 2) in the overall sample, with exception of the agreeableness item "critical/quarrelsome". Contrary to our prediction (H2b), we found no evidence for differential agreement across traits.

Table 2

Consensus (r_{wg} Value) in Prototypical Parent (TIPI) Trait Ratings

	Total			Males			Females		
Trait	**Total**	**Parent**	**Nonparent**	**Total**	**Father**	**Nonparent**	**Total**	**Mother**	**Nonparent**
Emotional Stability	.81	.83	.79	.90	.90	.89	.74	.78	.70
Extraversion	.79	.81	.77	.76	.80	.74	.82	.83	.81
Openness	.75	.78	.73	.76	.77	.75	.77	.80	.74
Agreeableness									
Critical/ Quarrelsome	.49	.48	.50	.55	.54	.56	.45	.44	.45
Sympathetic/Warm	.84	.83	.84	.81	.80	.82	.88	.87	.89
Conscientiousness	.86	.87	.85	.84	.85	.84	.87	.88	.87

Does it Matter if the Rater Is a Parent or not?

With exception of the agreeableness item "critical/quarrelsome", we found strong agreement among parents' (r_{wg} ≥ .78) and nonparents' (r_{wg} ≥ .73) ratings of a prototypical parent, contrary to our prediction of differential agreement across subsamples (H3a). Overall, parent and nonparent ratings yielded highly similar prototypes. Table 3 shows the mean-level differences between parents' and nonparents' ratings. Using independent *t*-tests (all p > .08), we found no evidence that parents and nonparents differed from each other on any of the ratings, contrary to our hypothesis (H3b, see Table S3 of the Supplementary Materials).

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Table 3

Personality Traits of a Prototypical Parent as Rated by Parents and Nonparents

	Total				Prototypical Father				Prototypical Mother			
	M (*SD*)		*M* Difference		*M* (*SD*)		*M* Difference		*M* (*SD*)		*M* Difference	
Trait	**Parent**	**Nonparent**	***d***	***p***	**Parent**	**Nonparent**	***d***	***p***	**Parent**	**Nonparent**	***d***	***p***
Emotional Stability	6.08 (0.94)	6.05 (1.02)	0.03	1.00	6.30 (0.73)	6.28 (0.76)	0.02	1.00	5.92 (1.04)	5.84 (1.17)	0.07	1.00
Extraversion	5.54 (0.88)	5.37 (1.02)	0.18	.19	5.38 (0.94)	5.16 (1.08)	0.21	.53	5.66 (0.81)	5.55 (0.93)	0.12	1.00
Openness	5.40 (0.87)	5.20 (1.01)	0.21	.08	5.28 (0.90)	5.10 (1.02)	0.18	.83	5.48 (0.85)	5.28 (1.00)	0.22	.34
Agreeableness												
Critical/ Quarrelsome	3.13 (1.44)	3.13 (1.42)	0.00	1.00	3.03 (1.36)	2.98 (1.32)	0.04	1.00	3.20 (1.50)	3.27 (1.49)	-0.04	1.00
Sympathetic/ Warm	6.38 (0.82)	6.42 (0.80)	-0.05	1.00	6.21 (0.90)	6.16 (0.84)	0.06	1.00	6.51 (0.73)	6.66 (0.68)	-0.22	.36
Conscientiousness	6.20 (0.78)	6.19 (0.84)	0.01	1.00	6.13 (0.86)	6.03 (0.87)	0.12	1.00	6.25 (0.72)	6.34 (0.79)	-0.12	1.00

Note. For *t*-test statistics, see Supplementary Materials. Listed *p*-values were corrected for multiple testing using Benjamini-Hochberg correction.

Does Gender Matter?

Consistent with H4a and H4b, a prototypical father was characterized by higher levels of emotional stability (d = 0.43), whereas a prototypical mother was characterized by higher levels of the agreeableness item "sympathetic/warm" (d = -0.52). Moreover, prototypical mother ratings were also higher in extraversion (d = -0.37) and conscientiousness (d = -0.28; Table 4). Additionally, the rank-ordering of traits from least to most prototypical were different depending on whether the target was a father or mother. A prototypical father was rated highest in emotional stability, followed by sympathetic/warm, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and critical/quarrelsome. A prototypical mother was rated highest in sympathetic/warm, followed by conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, openness, and critical/quarrelsome.

Table 4

Personality Traits of a Prototypical Father and Mother

	M (*SD*)			*M* Gender Difference	
Trait	**Total**	**Father**	**Mother**	***d***	***p***
Emotional Stability	6.06 (0.98)	6.29 (0.75)	5.87 (1.11)	0.43	< .001
Extraversion	5.44 (0.96)	5.25 (1.03)	5.60 (0.87)	-0.37	< .001
Openness	5.29 (0.96)	5.18 (0.97)	5.38 (0.94)	-0.21	.10
Agreeableness					
Critical/Quarrelsome	3.13 (1.43)	3.00 (1.34)	3.24 (1.49)	-0.17	.30
Sympathetic/Warm	6.41 (0.81)	6.18 (0.87)	6.59 (0.70)	-0.52	< .001
Conscientiousness	6.19 (0.81)	6.07 (0.86)	6.30 (0.76)	-0.28	.01

Note. For t-test statistics, see Supplementary Materials. Listed p-values were corrected for multiple testing using Benjamini-Hochberg correction.

Is the Average Parent Prototype Rating Valid?

Table 5 shows the squared differences between participants' self-rated BFI traits and the average trait levels of a prototypical father and mother. Independent t-tests indicated differences only between mothers' and women's (without children) similarity to a prototypical mother's personality for 2 out of the 5 traits, largely contrary to our hypothesis (H5). Specifically, mothers' self-rated levels of emotional stability; M = 3.04, SD = 2.75; M = 4.74, SD = 3.95; $t(261.43)$ = -4.20, p < .001; and extraversion; M = 0.93, SD = 1.12; M = 1.67, SD = 2.25; $t(218.84)$ = -3.55, p = .002; were more similar to the average mother prototype compared to women's (without children) self-rated levels of these traits. Results of mean-squared independent t-tests and non-squared mean-level differences (indicating direction of deviation) for these analyses at both Waves 1 and 2 can be found in Tables S4 and S5 of the Supplementary Materials.

Table 5

How Different Are Participants From the Average Parent Prototype?

	Prototypical Father				Prototypical Mother			
	Parent	Nonparent			Parent	Nonparent		
Trait	*M* Diff^2 (*SD*)	*M* Diff^2 (*SD*)	*d*	*p*	*M* Diff^2 (*SD*)	*M* Diff^2 (*SD*)	*d*	*p*
Emotional Stability	3.30 (3.23)	3.59 (3.26)	-0.09	1.00	3.04 (2.75)	4.74 (3.95)	-0.50	< .001
Extraversion	0.99 (1.13)	1.10 (1.52)	-0.08	1.00	0.93 (1.12)	1.67 (2.25)	-0.41	002
Openness	0.99 (1.33)	0.93 (1.16)	0.05	1.00	1.29 (1.35)	1.27 (1.44)	0.01	1.00
Agreeableness								
Critical/ Quarrelsome	4.62 (2.50)	3.95 (2.34)	0.28	.20	3.88 (2.47)	3.74 (2.56)	0.06	1.00
Sympathetic/ Warm	1.70 (1.79)	2.10 (1.95)	-0.22	.55	2.77 (2.42)	3.08 (2.91)	-0.12	1.00
Conscientiousness	2.20 (2.03)	2.92 (2.75)	-0.29	.10	2.03 (2.04)	2.42 (2.34)	-0.18	.67

Note. Diff^2 = Squared difference between participants' personal BFI ratings and the average prototypical parent traits at Wave 1. For *t*-test statistics, refer to the Supplementary Materials. Listed *p*-values were corrected for multiple testing using Benjamini-Hochberg correction.

Given slight age differences between parent and nonparent subsamples, we reran this test including age as a covariate. After controlling for age, parenthood status remained a significant predictor of similarity between self-rated and prototypical rated emotional stability and extraversion, with mothers being more similar than women without children. This pattern of results also emerged in analyses at the item level and a description of the results can be found in the Supplementary Materials.

Do Parents' Personality Traits Align More With Their Beliefs After the Transition to Parenthood?

Contrary to our hypothesis (H6), we found no change in parent's personality in the direction of their idiosyncratic parent prototype ratings. Results for all Big Five traits can be found in Table S6 of the Supplementary Materials. As personality change may occur over longer periods of time, we investigated this question in subsequent waves (see Tables S7, S8) but also found no change in parent's personality at these later waves.

Discussion

In the present study, we generated consensus-based Big Five personality prototypes of a typical father and mother and tested potential implications of new parents' beliefs about these prototypes.

What Is the Nature of People's Beliefs About Parental Personality Prototypes?

Both expecting parents and nonparents described their ideas of a prototypical father and mother in trait terms, with high levels of agreement. Four findings stand out.

First, we found support for the hypothesis that high levels of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are particularly indicative of a prototypical parent's personality (H1). These three traits have been referred to as markers of psychological maturity and often associated with growth and personality development (Bleidorn, 2015). It is thus not surprising that they are at the core of people's beliefs about a prototypical parent. Moreover, the parent personality prototype bears similarities to expert-consensus ratings of a healthy personality prototype (Bleidorn et al., 2020). Specifically, both the parent and the healthy prototype are characterized by high levels of emotional stability and agreeableness. Interestingly, the parent prototype is also characterized by high levels of conscientiousness whereas the healthy prototype does not differ from the normative personality in this domain. This could suggest that, while being highly conscientious may not be imperative to be considered 'healthy', people expect parents to be conscientious when caring for their children.

Second, with an exception to the agreeableness item "critical/quarrelsome", we found high levels of agreement for this prototype across different groups of raters and traits. This finding supports the hypothesis (H2a) that people have consistent beliefs about a prototypical parent but refutes our prediction (H2b) that people would agree more in their ratings of highly characteristic traits (i.e., emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) than in their ratings of less characteristic traits (i.e., extraversion and openness). We also found no evidence that parents and nonparents differ in their agreement or ratings of a prototypical parent (H3a, H3b), suggesting that beliefs about a prototypical parent's personality may not be affected by experience in that role. This finding may reflect the fact that parenthood is a common social role that virtually all people engage or interact with in one way or the other. Alternatively, more experienced parents may update and refine their beliefs about a prototypical parents' personality. In this study, we focused on first-time parents who provided the prototype ratings during pregnancy and thus before they became parents. Future research on more experienced parents is needed to test this hypothesis.

Third, despite high levels of agreement for a prototypical parent's personality traits, raters indicated some noteworthy differences between the personality traits of a prototypical mother and father. Specifically, the trait most strongly associated with a father prototype was emotional stability whereas the trait most strongly associated with a mother prototype was the agreeableness item "sympathetic/warm". Moreover, a prototypical mother was rated significantly lower in levels of emotional stability compared to the prototypical father (H4a), however, significantly higher than a prototypical father in the remaining traits, with the strongest effects for the agreeableness item "sympathet-

ic/warm" (H4b) and extraversion. These differences are consistent with past findings of gender differences in personality traits (Costa et al., 2001). Future research including ratings across genders is needed to further examine the degree to which these differences reflect specific beliefs about mothers vs. fathers rather than gender differences between male and female raters.

Fourth, to begin to examine the validity of the generated prototypes, we compared the similarity between parents' and nonparents' self-rated and prototypical parent personality traits. Unfortunately, our study design used two different inventories to measure the Big Five traits as pertaining to the prototypical parent vs participants' self-rated personality, thus partially obscuring interpretation of the similarity between the parent prototype and self-rated personality. However, given that these inventories were designed with the same latent constructs in mind, differences between parents' and nonparents' similarity to the parent prototype are still meaningful, albeit interpreted with caution. We found little evidence that parents' self-rated personality traits are more similar to the average parent prototype than nonparents' personality (H5), with only 2 significant effects emerging out of 10 comparisons. Specifically, mothers' self-ratings for emotional stability and extraversion were significantly more closely matched with a prototypical mother's levels of these traits than nonparents' self-ratings. This finding suggests that there may be some validity to the beliefs people have about parents' emotional stability and extraversion, particularly for mothers.

In summary, we found that a prototypical parent can be characterized, with high levels of agreement, in terms of the Big Five personality traits, suggesting that people hold specific beliefs about the personality traits that characterize parents. Both mothers' and fathers' personality prototypes are characterized by traits that reflect psychological maturity.

Implications of Parent Beliefs

The second goal of this study was to explore the implications of parents' beliefs about parental personality prototypes. Past research found little evidence for mean-level changes in personality traits following the transition to parenthood (Galdiolo & Roskam, 2014; van Scheppingen et al., 2016). We explored the possibility of idiosyncratic change in traits that parents deemed relevant or characteristic in parents. However, our results provided no evidence for the hypothesis (H6) that parents' personality traits aligned more with their own idiosyncratic beliefs about a prototypical parent's personality after the transition to parenthood. This finding provides another piece of evidence that the transition to parenthood is not directly associated with Big Five personality change (Wagner et al., 2020). However, it is worth noting that we measured the parent prototype and participants' self-rated personality with two different inventories, which may contribute to the lack of findings.

Limitations

Our study of prototypical parent beliefs has several strengths that allowed us to explore the importance of social role expectations while adding to the body of evidence on personality development during the transition to parenthood. However, there were also limitations. First, as mentioned above, rater and target were confounded such that men rated the personality traits of a prototypical father and women rated the personality traits of a prototypical mother. We were thus unable to disentangle whether gender differences in prototype ratings are driven by rater or target effects. Second, although parent and nonparent subsamples were selected based on similarity in region, age, and relationship status, and nonparents were blind to the goals of the study, parents and nonparents were not statistically matched. Third, participants provided prototype ratings only at Wave 1. As such, we were not able to test whether parents update their beliefs about a prototypical parent after transitioning into parenthood. Fourth, with only 10 items, the TIPI provides a relatively coarse description of the Big Five. Future research on personality prototypes may benefit from using instruments that allow a more fine-grained assessment of domain and facet scales. Fifth, there was a lack of commensurability when making personality trait comparisons between inventories. That is, we compared the parent TIPI prototype to participants' self-rated BFI profiles. Both the BFI and the TIPI were designed with the same latent constructs in mind. However, differences across these scales limit precise profile comparisons. Lastly, the nature and implications of the generated parent prototype is largely only applicable to beliefs within Dutch/WEIRD populations and thus may not apply to other countries at other times. However, this allows future research to compare other countries and other years of a prototypical parent's personality.

Conclusion

In the present research, we generated personality prototypes for a typical father and mother in a sample of Dutch parents and nonparents. Overall, a parent prototype can be characterized, with high levels of agreement, by high levels of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Personality trait comparisons between parents and nonparents provided some evidence for the validity of this parent prototype. However, beliefs about prototypical parent personality traits were unrelated to parents' personality development during the transition to parenthood. Together, these findings emphasize that people do hold consistent personality beliefs for social roles, however, they may not be as influential as we believe.

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Ethics Approval: Ethical approval has been received from the Institutional Review Board at Tilburg University, and this study conforms to recognized standards.

Data Availability: For this article, data is freely available (for access see Index of Supplementary Materials below). This is with exception to the data of an independent Dutch sample we obtained from a colleague to test H1, which is not shared publicly due to adhering to the informed consent.

Supplementary Materials

For this article, the following Supplementary Materials are available (for access see Index of Supplementary Materials below): the raw data, analysis script, information on the H7, descriptives, and analyses at the item-level.

Index of Supplementary Materials

Lenhausen, M. R., Hopwood, C. J., van Scheppingen, M. A., & Bleidorn, W. (2020a). *Supplementary materials to "The prototypical parent personality"* [Pre-registration]. OSF. https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/WFJ9M

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