



The Effects of Threatened Masculinity on Self-reliance and Help Seeking Behavior

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INTRODUCTION

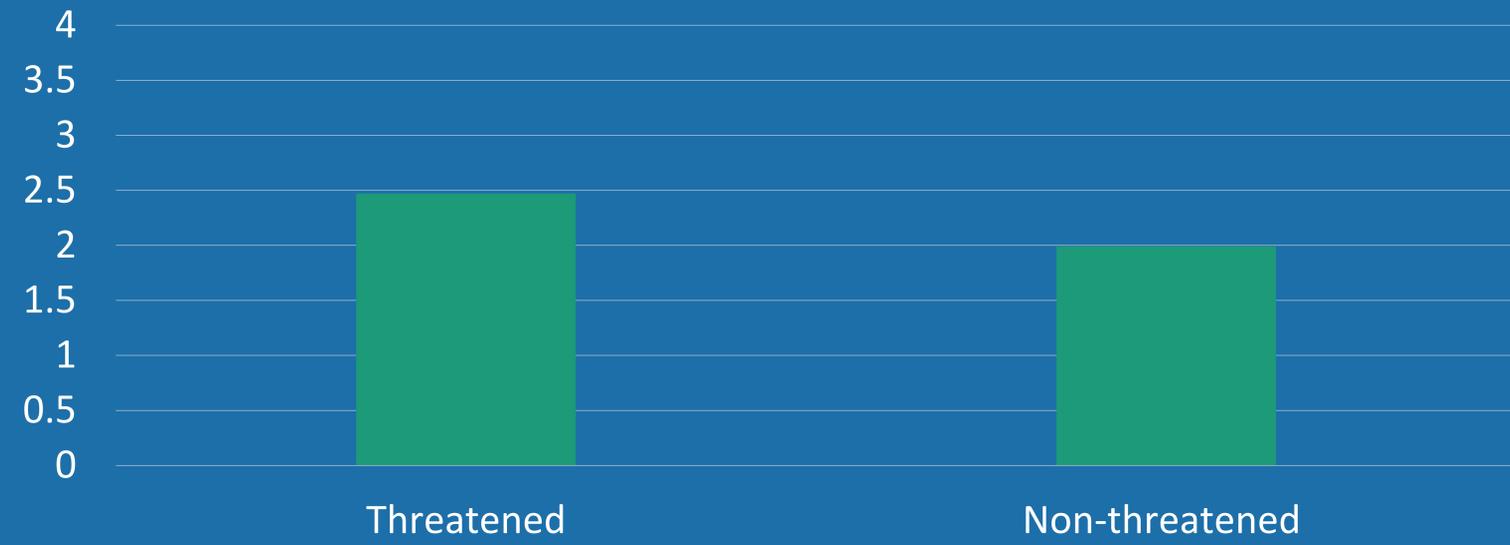
- “Toxic masculinity” is recognized as the restriction of male behavioral characteristics constructed by societal norms and formulated by gender roles and standards endorsing male dominance
- When masculinity is threatened men may feel stifled in their ability to endorse nontraditional gender norms due to a desire to reaffirm their masculinity
- Self-reliance, a notable masculine characteristic, has been linked to extreme negative mental health effects such as suicide ideation.

METHODS

- Online survey of 29 male college students between the ages of 18 and 23 and took place between February 19 and April 6.
- **Participants:** Mean age = 19.55 years; All male; 75.9% White, 13.8% Asian American, 10.3% Latinx, 6.9% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 3.5% Biracial, 3.5% International Students; 75.9% heterosexual, 6.9% bisexual, 3.5% homosexual
- **Measures:**
 - Demographics
 - Need for Control and Self-reliance subscale from the Barriers to Help-Seeking scale
 - Self-stigma of Seeking Help Scale

****Men who experienced threatened masculinity showed higher endorsement of self-reliant attitudes than men who were not threatened.**

Self-reliance Scores Between Threatened and Non-threatened Masculinity



Help-seeking Scores Between Threatened and Non-threatened Masculinity



Paragraph that served as the threatening measure:

A lot of recent evidence suggests that the ratio between the length of the index (or second digit, 2D) and ring (or fourth digit, 4D) finger or ‘2D:4D’ reflects the influence of prenatal testosterone during development. 2D:4D is thought to indicate levels of prenatal testosterone exposure. It has already been known for a while that testosterone levels are much higher in male than female fetuses and it has also been found that 2D:4D is related to the ratio of testosterone to estradiol. Consistently, 2D:4D is sexually dimorphic, with male 2D:4D differing from the female 2D:4D. Following these findings, you exhibit below average testosterone levels aligning with most female respondents according to the 2D:4D ratio.

Men value their masculine identity leading to heightened endorsement of masculine characteristics when masculinity is threatened.

DISCUSSION

- **Self-reliance.** When men’s masculinity is threatened it may be reaffirmed through higher preference for typically masculine attitudes such as self-reliance. Men may require reassurance of their masculine identity to avoid this heightened endorsement.
- **Help Seeking.** No significance in help seeking behavior following threatened masculinity. Men may not be completely opposed to help seeking in the forms of psychological or mental health help.
- Self-reliance is recognized as a feature of toxic masculinity more endorsed by men who are less secure in their masculinity.
- This survey was further conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic when help seeking has been a main topic in media therefore affecting the male adoption of this characteristic.

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