

To study the effect of age on attitudes towards men breaking traditionally "masculine" norms.

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Attitudes towards men breaking traditionally masculine norms have become more fluid over the past decade (2010-2020).

-----ABSTRACT-----

In the recent decade, the norms of what is traditionally considered to be masculine and feminine have begun to blend together, with the rigid, binary structure of gender now starting to lose its hold on society and a more fluid, spectrum-like approach towards the concept of gender identity and gender expression beginning to gain momentum.

Previous research has stated that 'hegemonic masculinity ideals characterize real men in western contexts as strong, sexually assertive, heterosexual, dominant, active and in control of their emotions. Violence is an integral part of this masculinity and a means of sustaining dominance or achieving status. These ideals are institutionalized during the childhood years and in family and sexual relationships. Men who express emotion and vulnerability within the context of hegemonic masculinity are showing weakness, and weakness is associated with femininity.' In the workplace, there is a 'nice guys finish last' attitude adopted by employees and employers, leading them to value and seek out more aggressive, domineering male coworkers. Gender nonconformity research and work on masculine ideology show how confining men to gender roles can have harmful implications. The problems that women encounter when breaking new ground have been highlighted in research on women in atypical roles. As gender roles evolve, our gender-related attitudes have become less traditional throughout time. All of the questions in the questionnaire survey were open-ended, and participants were asked to respond in a short answer (short paragraph) manner.

Questions were divided into three categories: emotional deviations from the projected society standard, physical or aesthetic deviations from the portrayed societal norm, and participants' judgments on stereotypical words such as "don't run like a girl."

The participants were accepting of men behaving in ways that were traditionally deemed unmasculine, especially female respondents and respondents from the age group 15-25.

Respondents clearly stated that society was changing in recent years and they did not want to limit their views on gender norms. The stereotype that 'nice guys come last' is changing as well, and as evidenced by the study respondents, less harsh and controlling men are now preferred. The paper's hypothesis is correct: attitudes toward males who deviate from conventionally masculine ideals have shifted in the last decade.

KEYWORDS: Attitudes, Masculinity, Gender.

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I. INTRODUCTION

"Attitudes towards men breaking traditionally "masculine" norms."

When women behave in ways that don't fit their gender stereotype — for example, by being assertive — they are viewed as less likable and ultimately less hireable. Does that same hold true for men? Are they judged negatively for straying from the strong masculine stereotype?

The short answer is yes. Research demonstrates that men too faced backlash when they didn't adhere to masculine gender stereotypes — when they showed vulnerability, acted nicer, displayed empathy, expressed sadness, exhibited modesty, and proclaimed to be feminists. This is troubling not least because it discourages men from behaving in ways known to benefit their teams and their own careers. Men are socialized to not ask for help or be vulnerable, and they are penalized when they challenge this notion. An informative set of studies from Duke University, University of San Diego and University of Pittsburgh in 2015 finds that when male (but not female) leaders ask for help, they are viewed as less competent, capable, and confident. And when men make themselves vulnerable by disclosing a weakness at work, they are perceived to have lower status.

Due to the "nice men finish last" stereotype, men are put down and belittled for being calm and unassuming, model characteristics in a woman. Research shows that more agreeable men across multiple industries made an average of 18% less in income and were evaluated as less likely to have management

potential as compared to less agreeable men. A study by Bosak (2018) showed that male managers in consulting who tended to advocate more for their team than for themselves were judged to be lower in agency and competence and more likely to be considered for job dismissal. Due to the negative reinforcement after displaying calmer behaviours, men are less likely to be agreeable and friendly, although these behaviours could theoretically help their career and make them better colleagues.

Research by Holland, Kathryn J., Rabelo (Jan 2016) shows that feminist men are more likely to be the victims of sexual harassment — from being told inappropriate jokes to being the recipient of unwanted sexual advances. In addition, men are more likely to be harassed when they work in male-dominated jobs and are perceived as too feminine. Men who ask for family leave, something that was historically in the purview of women, are viewed as poorer workers and are less recommended for rewards, compared to female counterparts. We should be welcoming feminist men, rather than derogating them for not being “man enough.” Yet, due to strict societal norms, men are expected to adhere to a cardboard cut-out of what a man is expected to be and punished if they deviate from the norm.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

After brainstorming on an interesting topic to pick with varying attitudes towards it, I decided to pick “Attitudes towards men breaking traditionally "masculine" norms” as a topic. As a woman, I have first-hand experience of how societal expectations of how a woman should behave and misogyny have negatively affected me, and wanted to shine a light on how those standards affect men as well, especially with more men breaking out of the traditional mold in recent times. I sincerely believe that picking this topic will lead us to have insightful and important knowledge on attitudes towards men breaking traditional norms across all ages.

In the last decade, that is the 2010s, we’ve come to see flexibility in gender roles and norms that were once considered set in stone. Whether it is men getting into make-up and the rise of male beauty gurus, to Will Smith crying openly on TV, to Harry Styles wearing a dress for the VOGUE magazine cover; men truly are breaking traditional gender norms, but these bold actions do not come without backlash. For the many people who have celebrated this open defiance of norms, there have been just as many, if not more people who have criticised these individuals, who criticise any individuals like them in their day-to-day life, for being “weak” or “feminine.”

The reason I was inspired to take up this topic is because of the recent uprising of these figures and their bold actions, as well as the controversy it caused and sudden uprising of negative attitudes, as well as a changing of a lot of individuals' attitudes to more favourable ones towards relaxed gender norms. Since masculinity and its definition is a complex topic with widely-differing attitudes and opinions towards it, I thought it would be fitting to use it as the topic of my project.

I planned to find out attitudes towards men breaking traditionally "masculine" norms using the survey method, questionnaires and the Likert scale. Using these methods, I would collect data from 20 randomly selected participants, of different ages (inter-generational study), discuss and analyse the data, eventually drawing a conclusion from the results.

I hope that this project will achieve our purpose of answering the questions that have been posed through this topic.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1) Gender relations among men: by Connell:

Connell (1995, 2000, 2005) has investigated gender relations among men by applying a critical feminist analysis and has found that relationships between men or groups of men are hierarchically organized. Hegemonic masculinity ideals characterize real men in western contexts as strong, sexually assertive, heterosexual, dominant, active and in control of their emotions. Violence is an integral part of this masculinity and a means of sustaining dominance or achieving status. These ideals are institutionalized during the childhood years and in family and sexual relationships (Connell 1995; Messerschmidt 1999). Men who express emotion and vulnerability within the context of hegemonic masculinity are showing weakness, and weakness is associated with femininity. According to Connell (1995, 2005), white, middle-class, heterosexual men set the normative standards of hegemonic masculinity, but only a few are able to practice it; others may in fact protest, contest and resist it. According to these gender norms, men are expected to seek and actively engage in sexual activity. If they are attacked, they are also expected to be able to defend themselves. Therefore, sexually assaulted men come to be seen as feminized victims and sexual objects: damaged, weak, powerless and helpless in the face of sexual violence (Kwon et al. 2007). Conventional masculinity norms generate self-blaming attributions that shape and influence how men respond to the experience of sexual assault. As many studies have problematized, men rarely self-report or disclose their victimization (Davies 2002; Mezey and King 1989; Peterson et al. 2011; Turchik and Edwards 2012; Walker et al. 2005). This results in underreporting, late reporting and a lack of help-seeking behavior, which in turn mean that men are also less likely to receive formal

support services, and instead rely on informal networks (Freeland et al. 2016). Men also run a higher risk of abusing alcohol and other substances as a way of trying to cope with or suppress difficult memories and feelings (Alaggia and Millington 2008; Ratner et al. 2003). In fact, following exposure to violence and power, some men react by overemphasizing masculine attributes, for example by displaying hyperactive, hypersexual, overcontrolling, aggressive or violent behavior (Lisak 1995).

2) When men break the gender rules: Status incongruity and backlash against modest men.

Adherence to masculine norms and stereotypes has been linked to negative consequences for men, suggesting that liberating men from the bonds of traditional masculinity would be beneficial (Courtenay, 2000; Pollack, 1998). However, when people deviate from stereotypic expectations, they encounter backlash (i.e., social and economic penalties; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). The current research demonstrated backlash in the form of prejudice against modest (i.e., atypical) men and supported predictions derived from the status-incongruity hypothesis (SIH) to account for backlash (Rudman, Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Nauts, 2009). Modest men were perceived as violating men's proscriptions linked to low status (e.g., weakness and uncertainty), as well as agentic men's prescriptions linked to high status (e.g., confidence and ambition). By contrast, status-neutral communal traits were not an explanatory factor in backlash. These findings suggest that perceived status violations underscore backlash, pressuring men to conform to masculine norms and stereotypes that limit their human potential. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2018 APA, all rights reserved)

3) Changing times, changing gender roles: Who do we want women and men to be?

This chapter examines how the gender belief system influences our perceptions of and reactions to women and men in nontraditional ways. The work described here is based largely on the beliefs of heterosexual, White, middle class college students. The expectations about what women and men should be guide and shape how women and men actually are. This process begins in infancy and continues throughout our lives. Although these beliefs are informative, providing a road map for our interactions with others, they are also limiting. Research on subtle sexism demonstrates the ways in which even well-intended gender-stereotypic beliefs limit women. Studies of gender nonconformity, as well as work on masculine ideology, highlight how boxing men into gender roles can have negative consequences. Research on women in nontraditional roles highlights the challenges women face when breaking new ground. As gender roles are changing, over time our gender-associated beliefs have become less traditional. (PsycInfo Database Record (c) 2020 APA, all rights reserved)

4) Toward a Transformed Approach to Prevention: Breaking the Link Between Masculinity and Violence:

Men are disproportionately overrepresented among both perpetrators and victims of violent crime. Scholars from the men's studies movement have documented a clear link between socialization into stereotypical norms of hegemonic masculinity and an increased risk for experiencing violence. Despite this evidence, most campus prevention programs fail to recognize the link between men and violence and use only traditional approaches to violence prevention. The most that on-campus prevention programs provide are self-defense seminars for potential female victims of rape and general campus safety measures. In this article, the author describes a comprehensive, transformed approach to violence prevention. Data from a year-long case study of Men Against Violence, a peer education organization at a large university in the South, demonstrate the feasibility of meaningfully expanding male students' conceptions of manhood and appropriate gender roles and, thus, reducing the likelihood of men's engaging in sexually or physically violent behavior.

III. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the paper was to study the effect of age on attitudes towards men breaking traditionally "masculine" norms.

The independent variable is age, and the dependent variable is attitudes towards men breaking traditionally "masculine" norms. The sample was a total of 100/50 people with group A being from the ages of 15-25 and group B being from the ages of 40-50. A questionnaire was developed with 20 subjective, open-ended questions, categorised on men's appearance, emotions, and phrases/ideologies associated with masculinity.

Examples of questions were: 'What are your opinions on men wearing nail polish, skirts, etc.?' 'Do you think that men should be allowed to cry in front of others or be vulnerable? Why?'

'How do you feel about the statement: 'Men should always be domineering, aggressive, and typically "alpha-male."?' The answers to the open ended questions are analysed based on age and how it affects the participants' attitudes; amount of positive and negative responses of the participants is calculated to understand the difference in attitudes of both groups

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The number of participants in the survey conducted for this research paper was 136.

The ages of participants in the survey varied from 15-45, with 33 being the age of 24.3 percent of the participants and the highest percent of all the participants of the survey.

The survey had 59.4 percent of female participants (81 female participants) and 40.6 percent of male participants (55 male participants), hence having a slightly greater number of female participants that took the survey, influencing the answers that have been provided (elaborated in the discussion section of the paper).

All (100 percent) participants answered every question of the survey, which contained open-ended questions on the topic of ‘Attitudes towards men breaking traditionally masculine norms have become more fluid over the past decade.’

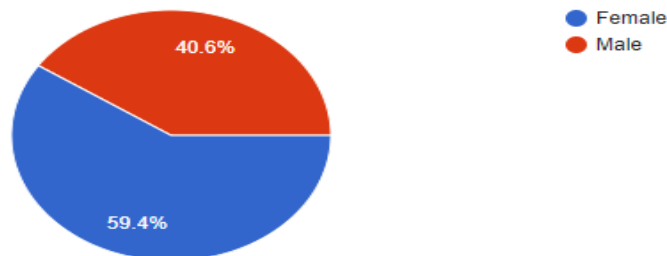
The answers were all in short answer (short paragraph) format and were varying from positive to negative responses.

Questions were categorized into three kinds: questions about men deviating from the portrayed societal norm emotionally, questions about men deviating from the portrayed societal norm physically or aesthetically, and questions about participants’ opinions on stereotypical phrases such as “don’t run like a girl”.

When questions were posed about men’s emotional needs (specifically, whether they needed to let out their emotions in a healthy manner/needed therapy) all answers for the above type of question (100 percent of answers) were positive, with no (0 percent of) negative answers. (Positive answers being for men’s healthy expression of emotions, and negative answers being against men’s healthy expression of emotions)

Contrary to that, when questions were posed about appearances of men outside societal norms/what is portrayed in media, such as more traditionally feminine appearances, the answers provided by the participants were more varied, with a larger percentage (51.48 percent) of participants straying to the idea that there was a certain norm of appearance that men had to keep up, and they would personally not feel comfortable if men dressed in traditionally feminine clothing.

Questions posed about participants’ opinions on stereotypical phrases such as “don’t run like a girl”, were met with only (100 percent) negative responses. All participants that took the survey reacted negatively to statements such as the one mentioned above, and provided negative responses for the upholding of similar kinds of norms.



V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All questions posed to the participants in the questionnaire survey were open-ended and answered in short answer (short paragraph) format.

Questions were categorized into three kinds: questions about men deviating from the portrayed societal norm emotionally, questions about men deviating from the portrayed societal norm physically or aesthetically, and questions about participants’ opinions on stereotypical phrases such as “don’t run like a girl”.

The participants gave varied answers for questions such as ‘What are your opinions on men wearing nail polish, skirts, dresses, etc.?’ , ‘How do you feel about men wearing colourful, flowy lace-y fabrics to office environments?’ , ‘Do you think men should be allowed to wear feminine clothing? Why?’.

Participants who were female tended to give more accepting answers as compared to male participants, with 60.30 percent of participants (98.7 percent being female) giving more accepting responses as compared to the rest of the participants who answered this category of questions, all of them being male.

Younger participants tended to give more accepting answers as compared to older ones as well, with participants of ages 17 to 25 especially providing examples from modern media, such as Schitt’s Creek.

A 23 year old participant answered: ‘Bring it on. People should wear what they feel comfortable in and not what others want them to wear. Best example: David from Schitt’s Creek. Why blend in, when you are born to stand out.’

For questions aimed at discerning attitudes towards men’s deviation from societal norms emotionally, the answers were all positive, with no negative reactions to the concept of therapy, or of healthy coping mechanisms.

Participants tended to answer such questions with statements such as ‘Perfectly fine.’, ‘Absolutely yes. They do get the help they need to meet their emotional needs.’, ‘Anyone who needs help should seek it

irrespective of their gender.’

Participants while answering questions about men’s emotional needs positively also answered questions about men’s platonic affection, specifically, whether they could be physically affectionate with other male friends, mostly positively as well. Some participant answers were: ‘Totally fine. I feel affection can be between anyone irrespective of anything.’, ‘Humans are social creatures and giving and receiving affection is a human need. Gender again is irrelevant.’, ‘It’s a free world and this is an individual’s choice.’. However, there were a few outliers where participants stated that it felt awkward and unnatural as compared to women being physically affectionate with their friends of the same gender. Attitudes have definitely changed and become more accepting towards deviation from institutionalised norms of men’s “ideal masculine” behaviour.

Participants had an overwhelmingly negative response to “stereotypical” patriarchal statements and phrases such as “don’t run like a girl”.

All participants who answered the survey responded negatively towards these statements. When asked for their opinions about the statement: ‘Men should always be domineering, aggressive, and typically “alpha-male.”?’ Participants’ responses were all in disagreement with the statement, examples of such responses being: ‘Society and world is changing. Such statements will not have any meaning in the near future. There is no reason why men should be aggressive or dominating.’ ‘It is not necessary as men can be different according to their characteristics, traits and they always do not need to be domineering and aggressive.’, ‘It makes me angry and frustrated to see men being boxed into this stereotype and women being disrespected by its implications.’ The perception of ‘nice guys come last’ is also changing and as it is shown through the respondents of the survey, less harsh and dominating men are actually preferred now. The hypothesis stated in the paper is correct; attitudes towards men deviating from traditionally masculine norms have become more fluid over the past decade.

VI. CONCLUSION

The alternative hypothesis was supported. Based on research and the survey conducted I think the conclusion of the research is that attitudes towards men deviating from societal norms have become more accepting in the past decade, and the norms for what men should look and behave like are changing as well.

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APPENDIX

1. What are your opinions on men wearing nail polish, skirts, etc.?
2. Do you think that men should be allowed to cry in front of others or be vulnerable? Why?
3. How do you feel about men taking up careers such as fashion design, patisserie, etc.?
4. What would you define as masculinity?
5. How do you feel about men wearing colourful, flowy lace-y fabrics to office environments?
6. What are your opinions about men needing therapy just as much as other genders?
7. Do you agree or disagree with statements like “boys don’t cry” or “don’t run like a girl”? Why?
8. How do you feel about the statement: ‘Men should always be domineering, aggressive, and typically “alpha-male.”?’
9. What are your opinions on men being stay-at-home fathers instead of women, while women go to work and become the breadwinners of the family?
10. Do you think men should be allowed to wear feminine clothing? Why?
11. What would you define a strong man as?
12. How do you feel about men being openly physically affectionate with other men in public?
13. What are your opinions on male beauty gurus?
14. How do you feel about the statement: “Men should repress their emotions always.”?
15. Do you think that men should be aggressive and domineering? Why/why not?
16. Would you consider a man who wore make-up consistently and publicly masculine? Why?

17. What qualities do you think an "ideal man" should have?
18. Why do you think men are discouraged from putting on make-up or wearing feminine clothing?
19. Why do you think men are held to higher standards over what clothing to wear rather than women?
20. Why do you think it is considered "weak" for men to cry or display unaggressive emotions?

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