# **Does Adherence to Masculine Norms Shape Fathers' Attitudes and Behaviors?**

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# Fathering in the U.S.

- Today's fathers spend more time parenting children than ever before
- Increased paternal engagement benefits children
- A need to understand factors that promote paternal engagement
- Traditional expectations of fathers vs. the new fatherhood ideal
- Hegemonic masculine norms often contradict the new fatherhood ideal

# **Identity & Fathering**

- Identity theory suggests identities are formed when meaning is attached to social status and their associated roles
- Identities which are more central to an individual are more likely to influence attitudes and behaviors
- Cultural context, group membership, and personal psychology impact personal identity
- Gender norms are one important structural factor

# **Masculinity & Parenting**

Mixed findings in the literature

- 1. Traditionally masculine men are less engaged as fathers
- 2. No relationship between masculinity and father involvement
- 3. Masculinity is associated with increased paternal engagement

These mixed findings may be due to issues in the operationalization and conceptualization of masculine norm adherence

# Masculinity, the New Fatherhood Ideal, & Parenting

- Salient masculine identity may reduce the likelihood one embraces the new fatherhood ideal
- Men who identify with the new fatherhood ideal may deemphasize, reject, or reshape traditional masculinity to fit their behaviors

#### Data

- Survey of Contemporary Fatherhood (SCF)
- Online quota sample of men with a biological (residential or nonresidential) child, residential stepchild, or other residential child between the ages of 2-18
- Men reported on their involvement with the youngest biological, adopted, step-, foster, or other child for which they are a father/father figure
- n= 2,194 fathers

# **Fathering Behaviors**

Measure	Children 2-8	Children 9-18	
Engagement	14 activities (i.e., playing, singing songs) on a 1-6 scale from ECLS-B ( $\alpha$ = .89)	6 activities (i.e., eating meals together, discussing family activities) on a 1-5 scale from SECCYD ( $\alpha$ = .91)	
Harsh Discipline	3 items from the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale (spank, hit, make fun of child) on a 1-4 scale ( $\alpha$ = .70)	6 items indicating if father criticizes, shouts, threatens physical harm, hits, strikes, or insults child ( $\alpha = .90$ )	
Monitoring	n/a	9 items on father's knowledge about child activities and whereabouts on a 1-4 scale from SECCYD ( $\alpha$ = .90).	
Warmth	8 items (i.e., hug and kiss child) on a 1-5 scale from ECLS-B ( $\alpha$ = .87)	9 items from SECCYD (act loving, let child know they care) on a 1-4 scale ( $\alpha$ = .91)	
Emotional Support	n/a	6 statements on whether child turns to father in times of emotional need on a 1-5 scale from NSFG ( $\alpha$ = .85)	

## **Measures (continued)**

- Adherence to Masculine Norms: CMNI-22 ( $\alpha$  = .71)
- New Fatherhood Ideal: 7 items measuring attitudes about the role of the father in a child's life ( $\alpha$  = .80)
- Control variables: educational attainment, race/ethnicity, income, employment status, religiosity, biological/non-biological father, residential status, nativity, urban/rural, region of residence, relationship with own father, prenatal activities

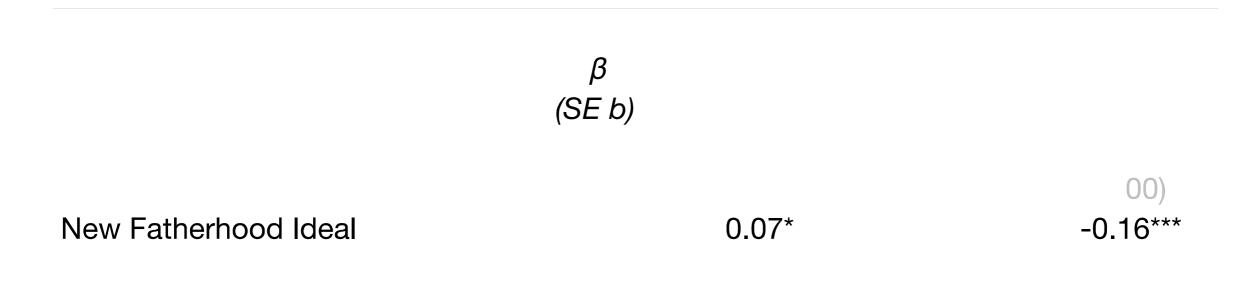
#### Adherence to the New Fatherhood Ideal

	β	SE b
Masculine Norm Adherence	-0.39	0.00***

N = 2194. Standardized coefficients are presented. All controls are included in the model.

p < .05. p < .01. p < .001

### **Instrumental Engagement with Young Children**



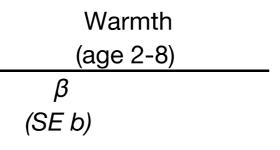
N = 1151. Standardized coefficients are presented. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001

#### Instrumental Engagement with Older Children

Engagement β (SE b)

N = 1043. Standardized coefficients are presented. All controls included. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001 0.03)

#### **Expressive Engagement with Children**



N = 1151 for young children, 1043 for older children. Standardized coefficients are presented. All controls included. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001

# Findings

- 1. Negative association between masculine norm adherence and endorsement of the new fatherhood ideal
- Greater adherence to masculine norms is consistently and strongly (relative to other predictors) negatively associated with both instrumental and expressive parenting
- 3. Fathers who adhere to norms of masculinity are less involved, in part, because they are less likely to embrace the new fatherhood ideal

## Conclusions

- 1. Men may struggle with competing expectations around fathering.
- 2. Results suggest that the relative salience of masculine and fathering roles may be important in predicting father involvement.
- 3. Gender ideology persists as an influential predictor of parenting behavior given the gendered structure of society.