

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 non-residential) 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	<i>SE b</i>
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

	β (SE b)	
New Fatherhood Ideal	0.07*	00) -0.16***

N = 1151. Standardized coefficients are presented.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Instrumental Engagement with Older Children

Engagement
 β
(SE b)

0.03)

N = 1043. Standardized coefficients are presented. All controls included.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Expressive Engagement with Children

Warmth
(age 2-8)
 β
(SE b)

03)

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
2. 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.