

From Stoic to Sensitive: Measuring Shifts in Societal Perceptions of Masculinity

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Abstract

This study, titled "From Stoic to Sensitive: Measuring Shifts in Societal Perceptions of Masculinity," critically examines the evolution of masculinity discourse from traditional stoicism towards an acceptance of vulnerability and sensitivity among men. Through a quantitative analysis involving 319 participants from the United Kingdom, the research evaluates societal perceptions of traditional masculinity (TM) versus new masculinity (NM), with a focus on emotional expressiveness, warmth, competence, and social distance. Results indicate a significant societal shift, where NM is perceived as being associated with higher emotional expressiveness and warmth, thereby challenging common stereotypes of male stoicism. This shift suggests an increasing societal acceptance of diverse masculine expressions, recognizing emotional expressiveness as an integral aspect of progressive masculinity. However, the study found no significant difference in perceived competence between TM and NM, indicating that being emotionally open does not diminish perceptions of male competence. These findings highlight the dynamic nature of gender norms, reflecting changing societal values that increasingly reject rigid stereotypes in favor of more inclusivity. The study calls for further exploration into the complex spectrum of masculinity and its implications for gender relations, mental health, and societal well-being, emphasizing the importance of evolving gender norms for the improvement of all individuals.

Keywords: traditional masculinity, new masculinity, stoicism, emotional expressiveness, societal perspective

From Stoic to Sensitive: Measuring Shifts in Societal Perceptions of Masculinity

“Man up!” and “Men don’t cry!” – such remarks have long accompanied male socialization, handed down by fathers, coaches, and peers. Yet, the modern age ushers in a new narrative: “Real men are not afraid to be vulnerable.” or “Real men can be strong and sensitive at the same time.” These evolving perceptions of masculinity undeniably intensify the weight of societal expectations on men. Often, these internalized masculine norms operate unconsciously, shaping behaviors and dictating roles (Bourdieu, 1977). As we navigate this discourse, it becomes crucial to analyze and understand the multifaceted dimensions of masculinity.

Masculinity, which includes the behaviors and roles typically associated with men, is a complex concept (Waling, 2019). It has been shaped over generations by societal, cultural, and individual influences (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Currently, as society evolves, the understanding of what masculinity means is being reconsidered, reflecting changes in families, workplaces, and personal relationships (Anderson, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The deep-rooted norms of traditional masculinity (TM) play a significant role in sustaining gender inequality. TM norms have historically given men more power, at times leading to harmful actions and attitudes against themselves and others (Connell, 2005). These norms, emphasizing stoicism and dominance, have been linked to negative outcomes such as violence (Jewkes et al., 2015), health issues (Courtenay, 2000; Mahalik et al., 2007), mental health struggles (McKenzie et al., 2022), and a reluctance to express emotions (Wong et al., 2006). Not expressing emotions can worsen mental health issues and suicide risk (Herreen et al. 2021; River & Flood, 2021). Recognizing the importance of addressing these challenges, this study aims to explore masculinity with a particular focus on male emotional expression. We will define key concepts, review relevant

theories, and examine the latest research on male emotional expression to identify effective interventions for improving men's quality of life.

Male Emotional (In)expressiveness

When it comes to masculinities and emotional expression, it is commonly assumed and supported by evidence that men express less emotions than women do (Brody, 1997; Kring & Gordon, 1998). Several perspectives are trying to explain this pattern of male inexpressiveness. Firstly, the evolutionary perspective assumes that females have biological predispositions to be more emotionally attuned because of the predominant role of caregiving, while men benefit more from inhibiting their emotional responses (Affleck et al., 2013). However, examples of different cultures where men are expressive challenge this notion (De Boise & Hearn, 2017).

Secondly, it is generally outlined that socialization processes are a fundamental factor responsible for male's lessened expressiveness. Evidence shows that boy and girl toddlers show no difference in talking about emotions, and both can talk about their emotions well. It is the parents that differently talk about emotions to their children differently depending on whether their child is a boy or a girl. In a study done by Fivush and colleagues (2000), it has been shown that mothers and fathers discussed emotions with daughters in much greater lengths compared to sons. Thus, at a later age, boys seem to be less emotionally expressive compared to girls. Because of the disadvantaged socialization for boys in the beginning, they might not develop skills for emotional communication as girls do.

Furthermore, the same study also found that anger was exceptionally discussed with boys in greater depth than girls. Another research done by Jakupcak and colleagues (2005) also demonstrated that adult men restrict much less anger and aggression compared to other emotions such as sadness. It seems as if men were socialized and allowed to express only anger.

Additionally, it was suggested that men's inexpressiveness might be a result of language limitations and verbal expressiveness solely. Holmes (2015) in their study found that men preferred tactile expressions in intimate relationships compared to verbal communication. When they were distanced from their partners and tactile expressions were not possible, they learned to express emotions verbally. These findings would be consistent with the proposed socialization theory (Fuvish et al., 2000) in a way that if emotions were not discussed with boys during childhood, they did not attain competence to verbally express emotions while girls did. However, we have to note that the study focused on intimate relationships, but emotional expression might differ compared to other settings.

An alternative explanation arises from research focusing on masculinity ideology based on social constructivism (Affleck et al., 2012). It suggests that emotional expressiveness is typically seen as feminine, whereas toughness and stoicism are viewed as masculine. Consequently, perspectives from these studies challenge the notion that men are incapable of expressing emotions just due to a lack of ability. Instead, they propose that men often choose not to express emotions and deliberately restrain them. The reason for this restraint is the societal pressure on men to adhere to the norms of TM. There is a prevalent fear among men that the exhibition of feminine behaviors could undermine their masculine identity (Kierski & Blazina, 2009; Sattel, 1976). Indeed, research by Jakupcak and colleagues (2005), has found that men often experience shame about their emotions, leading them to avoid, deny, or suppress these feelings. Note that anger, according to masculinity conduct, is an exception and is frequently judged an appropriate, even encouraged emotion for men (Berke et al., 2018). In our study, we consider the social constructivism hypothesis as the most relevant, though we do not discount the socialization theory. We suspect that adult men's conformity to masculine norms and the standards set during the socialization of young boys are likely interconnected. Ultimately, these social constructs of masculinity and femininity are

deeply ingrained in the fabric of society. When discussing social constructivism, we understand that society collectively shapes perceptions that might differ from objective truth, making these social constructs a form of reality. In this context, our primary variable of interest is societal perspective. Our research question inquires how society perceives masculinity, specifically, whether men are perceived to differ in emotional expression based on the values they endorse.

Variability in Expression

Despite the already mentioned fact that the general view is that men are stoic, evidence shows great variability in stoic tradition and cases when men demonstrate nontraditional expressivity. In a study focusing on widowed men, Bennett (2007) observed that despite adherence to unconscious stereotypes about male emotional expression, men demonstrated a significant ability to express feelings of sadness after losing their spouse. Notably, men who openly expressed their sorrows experienced better recovery than those who did not. So, emotional expressivity appeared to be a necessary component for effective coping with grief. Interestingly, these men did not perceive their emotional expressiveness as feminine but rather as a form of their masculine identity, describing it as “taking ownership of their emotions.” It seems that they reconfigured their masculine identity to include emotional expressiveness as an integral part. Another research project by Holmes (2015) examined men in long-distance relationships. Although these men initially expressed fewer emotions verbally, two significant trends were noted. First, many men displayed their emotions through tactile means, such as physical touch. Second, their female partners reported that over time, these men became more verbally expressive when physical expression was not possible. Thus, men from these studies show adaptability and the ability to reconstruct their masculinity. However, both these studies were conducted by qualitative interviews, therefore we have to be mindful of the potential

interviewer's and participants' subjective interpretations. Additionally, expressions in private and intimate contexts are very narrow and might not be generalizable across all situations.

Besides that, Elliot (2016) promotes the notions of emotional and sensitive men with arguments that it should be added to the construct of masculinity. She suggests that qualities including empathy, sensitivity, and expressivity should be fostered in men as well. Research into caring masculinity indicates that this approach can have a profound impact on society with more egalitarian relationships, better mental health, and a greater sense of well-being.

Traditional Masculinity

The academic discourse surrounding masculinities is both rich and expansive, reflecting a field that has grown increasingly central to contemporary gender studies. A foundational understanding of masculinity requires an exploration of gender, with which it is inevitably linked. Gender itself resists classification as a static personal attribute; rather, it is an evolving discourse, characterized by its dynamism and complexity (Connell, 2005). As a social construct, gender moves beyond basic biological explanations. Society, with its number of cultures and historical epochs, actively shapes the definitions and practices of gender, causing them to be context-dependent and variable. Connell's (2005) seminal work explains masculinity and femininity as forms of 'doing gender', emphasizing their performative nature within specific societal frameworks. For instance, the expression of masculinity in the Nordic countries may drastically differ from the masculine ideals prevalent in Brazil. Thus, masculinity can be understood as a mixture of practices, traits, norms, and roles that are recognized and valued in men by a particular culture at a given time. TM has historically been associated with a collection of attributes such as toughness, physical strength, and autonomy (Elliott et al., 2022; Randell et al., 2016). Connell (2005) further explains the concept of hegemonic masculinity, describing it as a pattern of practices that enable men to maintain dominance and authority, particularly over other men and women.

Toughness associated with TM is often perceived as incompatible with emotional expression and views emotions more as a sign of weakness (Cleary et al., 2011).

Consequently, keeping a stoic unemotional demeanor becomes a way for men to assert power and dominance (Connell, 2005). Emotionally restrained behavior is viewed as a symbol of competence and discipline in “tough men” (Hess et al., 2016). Research indicates that men who closely align with TM norms often fear appearing feminine through actions like showing emotions, crying, or displaying vulnerability (Kierski & Blazina, 2009). This fear drives them to conform to societal expectations, adhering to stereotypes that dictate that men should not openly express emotions (Jakupcak et al., 2005). It is crucial, however, to recognize within Connell’s (2005) theoretical framework, the plurality of masculinities that exist. Besides the hegemonic masculinity that is at the top of the social hierarchy, there are non-dominant masculinities. In our research, we focus on new masculinities and their comparison to TM.

New Masculinity

Several non-dominant masculinities live within the hegemonic hierarchy and participate in maintaining power. On the other hand, the new masculinity (NM) challenges the status quo by redefining what it means to be masculine. Both, TM and NM, are concerned with the expression of gender identity in men (Connell, 2005). However, NM challenges the restrictive norms of TM by embracing vulnerability and the importance of seeking support for mental health issues. In the family context, they encourage active participation in caregiving and domestic life instead of emphasizing men’s role as primary breadwinners and authority figures (Anderson, 2009; Elliot, 2016). When talking about progressive masculinity Kaplan and colleagues (2017) emphasized concepts like self-awareness, personal growth, and orientation toward well-being.

From this, we can see variability and an increase in the emergence of NM. All this represents a shift in gender dynamics, but it is essential to recognize that not all nontraditional

practices can be considered progressive. Research indicates that during the era of the so-called “new men,” certain groups have adopted some nontraditional attributes while still preserving traditional power structures instead of fostering equality (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Such males may be for example gentle and caring fathers but at the same time maintain authority in the household. This phenomenon is referred to as hybrid masculinity, which illustrates the adaptability and dynamic nature of masculine identities. This leaves us with the impression that the concept of masculinities is much more complex in the modern era (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For instance, NM does not necessarily oppose TM. Activities like childcare could be viewed both as a traditional duty of fatherhood and as an expression of nurturing in NM (Kaplan et al., 2017). It might be more accurate to view masculinity along a continuum rather than discrete categories (Connell, 2005).

On top of that, NM, by challenging traditional values such as toughness and dominance, potentially fosters a more supportive environment for men to express emotions and vulnerability. This departure from traditional norms may be why NM is seen as more aligned with emotional openness (Bennett, 2007; Croft et al., 2021; Holmes, 2015). Additionally, as NM continues to evolve, it likely faces fewer constraints from societal expectations traditionally imposed on men. A man identifying with NM may experience less pressure to adhere to stereotypical societal expectations due to this alternative identity (Montes, 2013). Furthermore, it is often linked with self-growth, encompassing adaptive and healthy ways of dealing with emotional and mental well-being (Kaplan et al. 2017; Wentzell, 2015). Consequently, it is plausible to predict that men identified with NM would be perceived as more emotionally expressive and have greater freedom in their emotional expression compared to males endorsing TM.

Warmth and Social Distance

In the context of masculinity and emotional expressiveness, warmth, and social distance are significant variables. Warmth, associated with the perception of friendliness and empathy (Fiske et al., 2007), can be negatively impacted by emotional inexpressiveness. This inexpressiveness might be perceived as a lack of empathy and, in turn, a lack of warmth (Bayes, 1972). It is generally known that traditionally men have been perceived to be lower on warmth than their female counterparts (Bennett, 1982; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Conversely, men who do not strictly adhere to traditional masculine norms may appear more emotionally open, enhancing perceptions of warmth and friendliness (Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2021; Szabo, 2014). For example, men who enjoy cooking, often considered a feminine task, are perceived as more caring and approachable (Szabo, 2014). This dynamic suggests a potential mediation effect of warmth in the relationship between emotional expressiveness and masculinity. Thus, we would expect that TM men would be perceived by others as less warm than NM men. Fiske's Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002) further illustrates that while emotional restraint may diminish perceptions of warmth, it can enhance perceptions of competence in men. Indeed, evidence suggests that men who inhibit their emotional responses are perceived as more competent and in control (Hess et al., 2016). Therefore, we would predict that TM men would be perceived as more competent than men endorsing NM.

Additionally, emotional inexpressiveness can lead to social distancing, hindering the formation of close connections and intimacy. Social distance is defined as individuals' acceptance and closeness towards members of different social groups. It measures the degree of intimacy or emotional connection people are willing to have with others (Wark & Galliher, 2007). Evidence suggests that males, particularly adult men adhering to traditional norms, struggle with forming close connections (McKenzie et al., 2018). Traditional masculine norms that promote emotional restraint can limit the depth of men's emotional connections and communication, affecting their social interactions and relationships (Way, 2011).

Furthermore, greater social distance can inhibit the expression of warmth and empathy, essential for close social relationships (Aue et al., 2021). On the contrary, NM endorses emotional expressivity, and that might foster stronger interpersonal relationships and enable empathetic rapport as well. Therefore, we would expect that people are less likely to befriend males adhering to TM norms and more likely to become friends with NM males. In other words, people would distance themselves more from men endorsing TM than NM.

Current Study

Despite the valuable insights provided by the aforementioned studies, most have relied on qualitative methodologies rather than quantitative ones (Bennet, 2007; Holmes, 2015; River & Flood, 2021; Szabo, 2014). While qualitative approaches offer an in-depth understanding of individuals' perspectives, they are often subject to the researcher's interpretation, which raises concerns about objectivity. The same problem concerns the generalizability of these findings considering that studies based on interviews typically feature small sample sizes. Additionally, most studies measured emotional expressiveness solely by verbal expression. As previously noted, men may express emotions in ways other than verbal communication, such as through nonverbal or bodily expressions (Holmes, 2015). Therefore, our study addresses this gap by employing an experimental methodology that captures both verbal and nonverbal forms of emotional expression. Our study is novel because it is the first to research both verbal and nonverbal forms of expression. We investigate the differences between TM and NM. The comparison analysis of expressiveness is vital to understanding societal constructs of masculinity and its evolution. We will do this by surveying the general population and inquiring about perspectives on TM and NM. The hypotheses concerning our dependent variables follow:

H1: Participants will perceive male with new masculinity traits as more emotionally expressive than male with traditional masculinity traits.

H2: Participants will perceive male with traditional masculinity traits higher in competence compared to male with progressive masculinity traits.

H3: Participants will perceive male with traditional masculinity traits as lower in warmth than male with new masculinity traits.

H5: Participants will perceive male with traditional masculinity traits higher in social distance than male with new masculinity traits.

Methodology

This section outlines the research methods used to conduct the study, including participant recruitment, data collection procedures, and the analytical framework employed to interpret the findings.

Participants

In total 319 participants took part in this study. The participants were recruited from the United Kingdom via Prolific Academic. The mean age was 46.2 with a standard deviation of 13.3. The criteria to participate were to be a white European woman over the age of eighteen. Participants who did not meet the criteria were deleted from the data. Based on our power calculations, the desired sample size would be 320.

Procedure

This study (PSY-2324-S-0053) was approved by the Ethics Committee of Psychology of the University of Groningen. The main purpose of the research was to reveal how particular personal and public behaviors of men who have adopted two different masculinity characteristics are evaluated by contemporary society. Data were collected on Prolific Academic, and participation in the study was done via Qualtrics (2005). Participation was voluntary and the participant could stop participating at any moment. The participants were provided with preliminary information about the study beforehand.

Study Information

First, the participants were asked to read the written consent form and asked for their consent to participate in the study. If they did not give consent, the participation ended. When the participants had signed the consent form, they were randomly allocated to either one of the experimental conditions: the TM profile (control) or the NM profile (experimental). In both conditions, the participants were asked to read the profile description of the assigned masculinity prototype. This profile description consisted of character traits associated with the masculinity prototype of each condition. The TM profile was described as stoic, insisting on one's views, competitive, and independent. The NM profile was described as sensitive, valuing the opinions of others, supportive, and collaborative.

Questions

The first part of the study consisted of asking participants to answer a series of questions to measure their perspective on the assigned masculinity prototype in terms of general masculinity outcomes. The general outcomes scales were: a perceived masculinity scale, a warmth and competence scale, and a social distance scale. The first part of the study consisted of 22 questions in total. To measure the societal perspective of the specific public and personal behaviors of interest, the participants read a scenario related to a state of depressed mood in which their prototype had to act. Since it is a bachelor thesis, participants also read and responded to other student groups' scenarios as well. The participants evaluated how they thought the assigned masculinity prototype would behave in the given scenarios. Thereafter, the participants were asked to provide demographic information, e.g., age and gender. No personal information was recorded. Lastly, when all questions had been answered, the participant was debriefed. In this debrief, the researchers enlightened the participants about the purpose and aim of the study.

Measures

Perceived Masculinity

The first question measured the perceived masculinity level of the male target. The following item was used: “Compared to an average man, how masculine is this man?” (1 = *extremely unmasculine*, 7 = *extremely masculine*).

Social Distance

To assess Social Distance, we used the following item: “To what extent would you like to be friends with this person?” (1 = *dislike a great deal*, 7 = *like a great deal*).

Warmth and Competence

To measure Competence, this research used the item: “Compared to the average man, to what extent do you agree that this man is competent?” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). To measure Warmth, this research used the item: “Compared to the average man, to what extent do you agree that this man is warm?” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Emotional Expressiveness

To measure participants' perception of the target's emotional expression we asked 3 items with 7-likert. The example item is: “To what extent do you think William will verbally express what he is experiencing/feeling to the people close to him? (talking about it, asking advice, ventilating).” (1 = *strongly inexpressive*, 7 = *strongly expressive*)

For a full version of the study measures, see Appendix B.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The survey was distributed through Prolific Academics. It was published on 23-11-2023 and available for 1 day. The compensation for participating was 10 USD per hour. It was estimated that completion of the survey took approximately 7-8 minutes, which equates to 1.17 – 1.33 USD.

Jamovi (2023) was used to calculate the descriptive statistics and general linear models of all the variables. A t-test is performed to analyze the differences between the NM

and TM conditions on the variables: masculinity level, social distance, warmth and competence, and emotional expressiveness.

Results

Of 319 participants who completed the initial questionnaire, 3 were excluded for not meeting the study criteria (gender). Additionally, we performed a t-test to ascertain the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation. The t-test on variable masculinity levels yielded a significant difference indicating that our manipulation of masculinity prototypes worked ($t(308) = 5.42.$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.62$, $CI [0.40, 0.86]$).

Factor Analysis

We performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine factor loadings to validate the measurement structure. We developed a 3-item measurement to examine the level of emotional expressiveness with the supervisor. We examined factor loadings and potential modifications. The CFA results supported the validity of the 3-item measurement. Factor loadings were significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from 0.64 to 0.93, indicating a strong association between the items and the latent construct. No modifications were made to the model as all fit indices met conventional criteria, suggesting a well-fitting model. The Cronbach's alpha of the measure showed the reliability of $\alpha = .83$.

For the measure of social distance, we developed a 3-item. The CFA results supported the validity of the measurement. Factor loadings were significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from 0.88 to 0.94, indicating a strong association between the items and the latent construct. No modifications were made to the model as all fit indices met conventional criteria, suggesting a well-fitting model. The Cronbach's alpha of the measure was $\alpha = .93$.

Warmth variable consisted of 3 items and its factor loadings were all significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from 0.90 to 0.97, indicating a strong association between the items and the

latent construct. No modifications were made to the model as all fit indices met conventional criteria, suggesting a well-fitting model. The Cronbach's alpha of the measure was $\alpha = .95$.

The competence variable was operationalized through a 3-item measurement. The CFA results did not support the validity of the 3-item measurement. Although factor loadings were significant ($p < .001$), item 3 loaded weakly (0.26), therefore we excluded it. The Cronbach's alpha of the measure without the removed item was $\alpha = .80$.

Descriptive Statistics and Assumptions

We computed descriptive statistics of dependent variables before conducting the main analysis. The computed descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation, are summarized in Table 1 (see Appendix A). The sample size of 316 surpassed the threshold of 200, therefore we checked the assumption of normality of variables with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov. The distribution of emotional expressivity was not violated ($D = 0.07, p = .06$). We checked the assumption of homoscedasticity by Levene's test. The variable emotional expressivity ($F(1,314) = 10.63, p = .001$) and social distance did not pass the Levene's test ($F(1,314) = 13.87, p < .001$), while warmth ($F(1,314) = 1.19, p = 0.276$) and competence ($F(1,311) = .0013, p = .97$) passed the Levene's test.

Main Analysis

We used a non-parametric test, the Mann-Whitney U, to examine potential differences in perception of emotional expressiveness between men endorsing TM values and those embracing NM values. The results indicated a significant difference between the two groups ($U = 7020, p < .001, d = 0.44, CI [-1.33, -0.67]$), suggesting that men with different masculinity values are perceived to differ in their emotional expressions, specifically NM ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.01$) being perceived as more expressive than TM ($M = 4.15, SD = 1.25$). These results supported our first hypothesis. Secondly, the Welch's t-test conducted to compare competence between men endorsing TM values ($M = 5.74, SD = 0.85$) and those embracing

NM values ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 0.87$) did not indicate a significant difference ($t(311) = 0.41$, $p = .679$, $d = 0.047$, $CI [-0.15, 0.23]$). These results suggest that men with different masculinity values are not perceived to differ concerning their level of competence. This indicates evidence against our second hypothesis. Thirdly, the Welch's t-test conducted to compare warmth between men endorsing TM values ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.09$) and those embracing NM values ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 0.97$) indicated a significant difference ($t(311) = -12.02$, $p < 0.001$, $d = -1.35$, $CI [-1.63, -1.17]$). These results suggest that men with different masculinity values differ on how warm they are perceived by participants, thus supporting our third hypothesis. Fourth, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare the social distance between men endorsing TM values ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.30$) and those embracing NM values ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 0.97$). The results showed a significant difference ($U = 5074$, $p < .00$, $d = 0.59$, $CI [-1.67, -1]$). These results suggest that men with different masculinity values are differently perceived on the social distance dimension, hence, in line with our fourth hypothesis.

Discussion

Our study aimed to explore societal views on different forms of masculinity, focusing on traditional masculinity (TM) and new masculinity (NM). We examined the emotional and social aspects of these masculinity types, questioning whether TM and NM are perceived differently in these areas. Our key variables included emotional expressiveness, social distance, warmth, and competence.

Our manipulation check was successful as participants distinguished between the NM prototype and the TM prototype. The findings supported most of our hypotheses. Firstly, males aligned with NM were seen as more emotionally expressive than their TM counterparts. However, our hypothesis about competence did not hold up; participants saw no significant difference in competence levels between TM and NM. Our third hypothesis on warmth differences was confirmed as males associated with NM values were perceived as warmer

than those with TM values. Additionally, our fifth hypothesis about social distance was supported, indicating that participants distanced themselves more from TM males than from NM males.

These results illustrate that TM and NM are distinctly perceived in certain emotional and social dimensions. It implies that society recognizes males based on different values they endorse and that has in turn an impact on how society perceives them. Our findings are important because they contribute to the body of research that states that masculinity is not a static and definite property but rather a dynamic concept (Connell 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It seems that those men endorsing NM standards are allowed to deviate from strict stoicism and exhibit more expressivity. The finding that NM males are perceived as more emotionally expressive than TM males aligns with contemporary shifts in societal attitudes toward male emotionality (Anderson, 2009; Bennet, 2007; De Boise & Hearn, 2017; Elliot, 2016). This suggests a growing recognition and acceptance of emotional diversity in men, challenging the traditional stereotype of male stoicism. Moreover, the change reflects an evolving societal understanding that emotional expression is a human trait, not restricted by traditional gender norms (De Boise & Hearn, 2017).

The lack of significant difference in perceived competence between TM and NM males is particularly noteworthy. This result suggests that societal views on competence do not necessarily depend on adherence to TM or NM norms. It may imply that competence, as a trait, is perceived as more universally applicable across different masculinity types, or that the traditional association of competence with TM is changing. The research conducted by Brambilla and colleagues (2011) and Eisenbruch and Krasnow (2022) provides insightful explanations regarding the evolutionary importance of the perceived traits of warmth and competence. These studies suggest that, from an evolutionary perspective, warmth may be valued more highly than competence in terms of survival and social cooperation. Specifically,

their findings indicate that warmth, as a personal trait, plays a crucial role in fostering cooperative relationships, which are essential for survival. Hence, the emphasis on warmth is based on the idea that it benefits the group by promoting harmonious interactions and mutual support. In contrast, competence is a trait that primarily benefits the individual who possesses it. Thus, it might be that it is more important for individuals to recognize warmth or lack of warmth in others because this trait will have a more significant impact on them. Moreover, the confirmation that NM males are perceived as warmer compared to TM males can be interpreted as a societal endorsement of more empathetic, approachable, and emotionally available male behaviors (Bayes, 1972). This finding aligns with a broader societal trend toward valuing emotional intelligence and interpersonal connection (Elliot, 2016), which are key aspects of warmth.

The supported hypothesis that people distance themselves more from TM males than from NM males provides an interesting perspective on social connectivity and masculinity. It supports the current trend that society endorses NM values (Anderson, 2009). Moreover, it might suggest that traditional masculine values, which often emphasize independence and emotional restraint (Elliott et al., 2022; Randell et al., 2016) might be associated with a perception of lesser approachability and openness. This echoes the other studies (Blazina et al., 2007; McKenzie et al., 2018) addressing the issue of men who struggle to form connections and loneliness. In contrast, NM, which encourages emotional openness, seems to foster perceptions of greater social connectedness. This might illustrate a potential mediation effect of emotional inexpressiveness between TM and social distance. However, further research would be necessary for this preliminary proposition. In conclusion, this suggests that the qualities of NM are not only valued in society but also more effective at forming social relationships.

Implications

Our research brings novel methodology to masculinity studies with its quantitative comparative design. On top of that, since we measured societal perspective, this brings new insight into how these masculinity norms are formed and reconstructed. This study challenges the traditional notions of masculinity as a monolithic, unchanging trait. Hence, several implications can be derived from this. It implies a need for theories of gender and identity to evolve, recognizing masculinity as a fluid and multifaceted construct (Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018.). This could lead to a more nuanced understanding of gender identities in psychological and sociological theories. This emphasizes previous advocates for reconsideration of old definitions of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Elliot, 2016; Kaplan et al., 2017).

On top of that, our study questions the applicability of the Stereotype Content Model in its current form to masculinity traits, especially regarding competence. This model proved to be effective in differentiating masculinity-femininity on competence vs. warmth (Ebert et al., 2014), however, it may be limited when applied solely to masculinity. Males might be viewed as more static on trait competence compared to warmth. Hence, we suggest that exploring solely trait warmth might be more plausible. Lastly, this study contributes to theories related to emotional expressiveness in men, challenging the stereotype of male stoicism. It suggests that theories on emotional expression and emotion regulation need to consider the evolving norms of masculinity and how they influence men's emotional lives.

Besides the implications in theory, several suggestions can be implemented in practice to improve men's lives. Emotional restriction and TM are associated with health neglect, and negative impact on mental health such as giving rise to depression (Herreen et al. 2021) and suicide (River & Flood, 2021). Although we know about these negative consequences on mental health, there has been limited implementation to target this issue. Therefore, we suggest that clinical practices address issues with emotional inhibition. For example,

therapists and counselors could include training for emotional expressiveness in their therapy. One potential approach could be Emotion Awareness and Expression Therapy (Lumley et al., 2017). This therapy seems to show significant improvement in patients with chronic emotional suppression. This might potentially enhance the treatment and improve the mental health of many men.

In addition, these implications are not limited solely by therapeutic purposes but can be used on a larger scale. Educational institutions and organizations could develop programs that challenge TM stereotypes. Workshops that encourage emotional expressiveness and vulnerability in men, aligned with the principles of NM, can help in breaking down harmful stereotypes and promoting healthier, more inclusive attitudes towards masculinity. In turn, these changes promoting mental health can improve men's lives and relieve females from emotional burdens (Croft et al., 2021).

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study offered valuable insights into the nuances of masculinity, it's crucial to recognize its inherent limitations. Our investigation delved into society's perceptions and their potential influence on male behavior. It's important to note, however, that this relationship is likely bidirectional. Masculinity performances themselves may shape societal perceptions, highlighting a dynamic interplay between individual behavior and social constructs. This complexity makes it difficult to draw broad conclusions and we cannot assert any causal relationships based solely on our findings. To further expand upon the insights observed from our current study, future research should explore the following key areas.

Firstly, it might be crucial to look not only at perceptions of society on masculinities but also at how the studied dependent variables such as warmth or emotional expression truly manifest in males endorsing TM vs NM. This could provide us an insight into the interaction between society's perspective and men's actual behaviors.

Secondly, while our study contributes to challenging monolithic views of masculinity and gender, we employed a somewhat categorical approach in distinguishing between TM and NM. This methodology, although informative, oversimplifies the complex spectrum of masculinity. The existing literature suggests several other masculinity subtypes such as consumerist masculinity (Kaplan et al., 2017), hybrid masculinities (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014), and caring masculinities (Elliot, 2017; Offer & Kaplan, 2021) which our research did not explore. The division between TM and NM, while clear in our study, may not accurately reflect real-world scenarios, potentially impacting the ecological validity of our findings. Future research could build upon our findings of the difference between TM and NM and delve into researching more masculinity subtypes.

Lastly, our sample was exclusively composed of female participants. This selection criterion narrows the scope of our conclusions, limiting their generalizability to a broader, more diverse population. As a result, we find it important that the research is replicated on the male population as well as different cultures to enhance the generalizability of our findings and most importantly to objectively represent the societal perspective since it is comprised of individuals of all genders.

Conclusions

In summary, our study confirmed most hypotheses, except one related to competence. Findings indicate that males aligned with NM are perceived differently than those aligned with TM, reflecting societal changes in understanding masculinity. The research contradicts the stoic male stereotype and underscores masculinity's evolving nature. Future studies should explore this evolution across broader masculinities and various cultures.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

variable	TM		NM		Marginal	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Masculinity	5.45	1.07	4.82	0.97	5.14	1.07
Level						
Social Distance	4.35	1.30	5.72	0.97	5.03	1.34
Warmth	4.32	1.09	5.71	0.97	5.01	1.25
Competence	5.74	0.85	5.70	0.87	5.72	0.86
Emotional	3.21	1.01	4.15	1.25	3.67	1.23
Expression						

Note. traditional masculinity (TM), new masculinity (NM); mean (*M*), standard deviation

(*SD*)

Appendix B

Measures

Perceived Masculinity

- 1) Compared to an average man, how masculine is this man? (*1 - extremely unmasculine, 2 - moderately unmasculine, 3 - slightly unmasculine, 4 - neither masculine nor unmasculine, 5 - slightly masculine, 6 - moderately masculine, 7 - extremely masculine*)

Social Distance

- 1) Compared to the average person, to what extent would you like to be friends with this person? (*1 - dislike a great deal, 2 - dislike a moderate amount, 3 - dislike a little, 4 - neither like nor dislike, 5 - like a little, 6 - like a moderate amount, 7 - like a great deal*)
- 2) Compared to the average person, to what extent would you like to be a colleague with this person? (*1 - dislike a great deal, 2 - dislike a moderate amount, 3 - dislike a little, 4 - neither like nor dislike, 5 - like a little, 6 - like a moderate amount, 7 - like a great deal*)
- 3) Compared to the average person, to what extent would you like to be a neighbor with this person? (*1 - dislike a great deal, 2 - dislike a moderate amount, 3 - dislike a little, 4 - neither like nor dislike, 5 - like a little, 6 - like a moderate amount, 7 - like a great deal*)

Warmth and Competence

- 1) Compared to the average man, to what extent do you agree that this man is competent? (*1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - somewhat disagree, 4 - neither agree nor disagree, 5 - somewhat agree, 6 - agree, 7 - strongly agree*)

- 2) Compared to the average man, to what extent do you agree that this man is independent? (*1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - somewhat disagree, 4 - neither agree nor disagree, 5 - somewhat agree, 6 - agree, 7 - strongly agree*)
- 3) Compared to the average man, to what extent do you agree that this man is competitive? (*1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - somewhat disagree, 4 - neither agree nor disagree, 5 - somewhat agree, 6 - agree, 7 - strongly agree*)
- 4) Compared to the average man, to what extent do you agree that this man is likable? (*1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - somewhat disagree, 4 - neither agree nor disagree, 5 - somewhat agree, 6 - agree, 7 - strongly agree*)
- 5) Compared to the average man, to what extent do you agree that this man is warm? (*1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - somewhat disagree, 4 - neither agree nor disagree, 5 - somewhat agree, 6 - agree, 7 - strongly agree*)
- 6) Compared to the average man, to what extent do you agree that this man is good natured? (*1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - somewhat disagree, 4 - neither agree nor disagree, 5 - somewhat agree, 6 - agree, 7 - strongly agree*)

Emotional Expressiveness

William Burton has not quite been feeling himself lately. He feels low in energy most days, doesn't enjoy his hobbies as much as he used to and often experiences a sombre mood. He has been arriving late at work recently, has been reluctant to do his weekly sport routine and doesn't show up to gatherings with his friends as often as he usually does. He worries about the implications his low mood will have on the future.

Base your answer to the following questions on William Burton's character, not the state of his physical and emotional well-being.

- 1) To what extent do you think William will verbally express what he is experiencing/feeling to the people close to him? (talking about it, asking advice, ventilating). (*1 -*

strongly inexpressive, 2 - inexpressive, 3 - somewhat inexpressive, 4 - neither inexpressive nor expressive, 5 - somewhat expressive, 6 - expressive, 7 - strongly expressive)

- 2) To what extent do you think William will visibly display his emotions in his entire demeanour? (tone of voice, posture, facial expression). (*1 - strongly concealing emotions, 2 - concealing emotions, 3 - somewhat concealing emotions, 4 - neither concealing nor displaying emotions, 5 - somewhat displaying emotions, 6 - displaying emotions, 7 - strongly displaying emotions*)
- 3) To what extent do you think William will be able to effectively put his feelings/emotions into words? (e.g. when talking to someone about it). (*1 - very inadequately, 2 - inadequately, 3 - somewhat inadequately, 4 - neither effectively nor inadequately, 5 - somewhat effectively, 6 - effectively, 7 - very effectively*)