



# Intergenerational masculinity threat: consequences for the male identity

*Jennifer Koning*

Master Thesis – Applied Social Psychology

S3321681  
April 2022  
Department of Psychology  
University of Groningen  
Examiner/Daily supervisor:  
dr. Yasin Koc

A thesis is an aptitude test for students. The approval of the thesis is proof that the student has sufficient research and reporting skills to graduate, but does not guarantee the quality of the research and the results of the research as such, and the thesis is therefore not necessarily suitable to be used as an academic source to refer to. If you would like to know more about the research discussed in this thesis and any publications based on it, to which you could refer, please contact the supervisor mentioned.

### **Abstract**

Masculinity threat for men can have different negative emotions and attitudes attached to it. This paper focuses on the differences of masculinity threat between generations on several concepts such as endorsing traditional male role norms, emotions, and coping strategies like social creativity strategies or collective action. Our study consisted of 245 United States citizens that are male ( $M = 44.23$ ;  $SD = 17.46$ ) who completed an online questionnaire assessing demographics, the male role norms, emotions, social creativity strategies, and collective action. It was found that men belonging in the older generation endorse more traditional masculinity roles in the threat condition in comparison to all other conditions. The hypotheses that older men would have other identity management strategies than younger people to restore their male privilege and older men would experience more negative emotions in the threat condition in comparison to older men in the control condition and younger men overall were also not supported. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

### **Intergenerational masculinity threat: consequences for the male identity**

There is a higher and higher percentage of women in the parliament every year worldwide (UN Women, 2020). And this is not the only field where women take in more place than before. This shows that today's society is more focused on gender equality and making sure that women are equal to men. This comes with the change of expressing masculinity in certain ways. For example, the traditional household division is different, there are more women working in higher positions nowadays, and both males and females in martial arts, where muscle mass plays a role in superiority, are seen as trainees and not by their gender (Maor, 2019). Also, women's rights activists, also known as feminists, have been around since the beginning of the 1800s (Hunt, 2015). Each wave of feminism builds forth on the previous in attempting to battle inequalities between men and women and acquiring equality in the field. It was not always the case that women had some of the equal opportunities women and men have nowadays in our societies. The equalities that are strived for are often times found in the core beliefs of how society is structured. Most countries have made it legal for women to vote somewhere in the twentieth century (Amnesty International, 2022). Before that, women were seen as not capable to make such decisions on their own.

With the change of societal roles, the perception and experience of masculinities are also changing. The division of roles in a family is different now than it was some decades ago. Women work more often than in prior decades, women have more financial stability to escape a relationship they do not want to be in or stay single longer than their parents did. Also, women are seen as more equal to men in the workplace with a quota to have 20, 30 or 40 percentage of women or even a 50/50 men-women division in companies (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance & Stockholm University, 2009). On top of that, with the online society that we live in nowadays, the content we see daily can reinforce certain male and female roles, which can for example come in the form of advertisements. But

nowadays it is easy to come in contact with like-minded people on the internet. This can be both a good and bad thing, because there is a lot of misinformation on the internet, also about masculinity, and mostly young people come in touch with this and are more easily influenced (Alruwayshid et al., 2021). Some new information can also feel threatening to men when it does not conform with their beliefs and they can have a negative reaction to this (Dahl et al., 2015; Swim 2001; Cheryan 2009). So, these changes of societal roles can come faster than some people in society can adapt.

The change of societal roles can come with changes of views on masculinity and femininity. It can be threatening to men's masculinity when the clear cut of what is masculine and what is feminine blurs. This clear cut of what is masculine and what is not can be related to changes happening in society, like the change for equality between genders as stated above. By this change, men can feel threatened and uncertain about their prospect. Earlier research found that this shifting of men becoming less masculine, or so to say even more 'feminine', can cause some masculinity threat in males (Konopka et al., 2019). We focus in this research on what reactions men will have when they feel that their masculinity is threatened as compared to men who are not threatened. Accordingly, we aim to examine at the effect of status threat and generational differences on endorsement of traditional masculinity, emotions, and identity management strategies.

### **Masculinity Threat**

Masculinity threat is the masculine gender threat and is described as experiences that decrease a man's status as a stereotypical man (Borras Guevara & West, 2021; Michniewicz et al., 2014). Following the precarious manhood theory of Vandello and Bosson, masculinity is the man's conformity to traditional masculinity (Vandello, 2008), and thus stereotypical masculinity. Inequality is an aspect of masculinity, thus equality can threaten masculinity.

Masculinity threat happens when a male's masculinity is threatened, for example by telling him he is not masculine or when there is equality between men and women. When masculinity is threatened, this has different consequences for the man's behavior and feelings towards society, other men, and women.

Masculinity threat can have different negative outcomes for society and the people in it. Men can have public discomfort and have an ideological dominance of men (Dahl et al., 2015) when they experience a masculinity threat. This aligns with the precarious manhood perspective (Vandello & Bosson, 2013; Dahl et al., 2015). After a masculinity threat, men feel anger, sadness, and fear (Dahl et al., 2015). Anger is especially an important feeling in the case of masculinity threat. Men feel angry, but also how others perceive a man's masculinity is positively correlated with anger. The heightened anger is correlated with endorsement of ideologies to promote men's power and masculinity threat can awaken the endorsement of men's societal power (Dahl et al., 2015). Thus, anger in men can awaken indirectly the ideologies to promote their power and the threat itself can stimulate the actual endorsement of men's societal power. Resulting in more stereotypical masculine attitudes and behaviors (Konopka et al., 2019), feelings, and activities to make themselves more masculine and create a bigger gap between them and not-masculine members of society (e.g., women and gay men). This can entail sexualization of women and higher public discomfort (Dahl et al., 2015). It has been found that anger is an important mediator between public discomfort and sexualization of women (Dahl et al., 2015). This explains why only masculinity threat, thus without anger, leads to less ideological dominance, and thus sexualizing women.

Communicating this ideological dominance towards women can have negative effects on women. They reduce the feelings of possible success, feelings of belonging, participation in stereotypically masculine achievement domains (Dahl et al., 2015; Swim 2001; Cheryan 2009), and undermines performance, which by themselves, also have negative effects like

reducing access to resources, opportunities, and power and status (Dahl et al., 2015). Because ideological dominance is quite subtle, it is a socially accepted means of increasing power in men and repairing their masculinity. It is also not seen as aggressive towards men. For those men, these are facts. Also, sexism can be seen as cherishing, protecting and pedestaling women by the men using it (Dahl et al., 2015). To conclude, when men experience a masculinity threat, numerous negative behaviors and attitudes can come forth from that. This does not only affect women, but also affects gay men (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2019).

Other studies have also found that after a masculinity threat, men have more negative attitudes toward gay people (Konopka et al., 2019; Rivera & Dasgupta, 2018; Willer et al., 2013), behaved more aggressively toward gay work partners than heterosexual ones (Talley & Bettencourt, 2008), and expressed increased negative affect toward effeminate gay men than toward masculine ones (Glick et al., 2007). Men expressed stronger prejudices toward gay people, but only when these prejudices were subtle and covert. These negative attitudes and behaviors have been found to be aimed at restoring manhood (Konopka et al., 2019). It is especially found that this negative attitude and behavior is expressed as homonegativity, which might be embedded in a religious or moral context. The authors (Konopka et al., 2019) have stated that religious fundamentalism can be a moderator, thus we will include religion in the study. They also state that age can be a potential moderator because older people have a more old-fashioned way of thinking than younger people (Konopka et al., 2019). This could mean in scope of our study that older men would stick to a more old-fashioned way of reacting to a masculinity threat, by reacting more negatively to it.

It is important how a threat works in order to understand the effects a threat can have. A threat works in the sense of distinctiveness (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2017), the distinctiveness between groups is essential for identity functioning. Reduced intergroup differences can threaten the ingroup distinctiveness, which can result in intergroup

differentiation through a reactive distinctiveness process when there is a high intergroup similarity. If we put this in the context of men and women, they see themselves as different. If they look more and more similar, thus women gaining power or men losing power, we believe this can result in an identity threat for men. They react to strengthen their group distinctiveness by emphasizing characteristics of the group or increasing intergroup discrimination and prejudice (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2017). We see this in the sense that men have more negative attitudes and behaviors to the groups that they want to be distinctive from: gay men, transgender people, women, etc. It has also been found that egalitarian norms, which strive that all humans are equal, can increase prejudice and discrimination when group distinctiveness feels threatened (Gabarrot et al., 2009). For men this feels likely more like a threat than to women, because men endorse more dichotomized gender identities (Bosson & Michniewicz, 2013) and conform more to traditional gender roles (Gal & Wilkie, 2010). They also experience more discomfort when gender roles are violated and when they are misclassified as gay. It was found by Falomir-Pichastor et al. (2017) that egalitarian norms lead to more negative attitudes toward the outgroup, gay people, by men, if the distinction is threatened. Accordingly, we will build further on the masculinity threat by focusing on the male privilege threat (e.g., reminding people that equality in society is increasing and men potentially losing their higher status).

### **Generational Differences**

In the current research, we will also look at generational differences between men when they experience a male privilege threat. Generational differences have been found before in research, but have not yet been directly related to masculinity threat. For example, younger adults acknowledge role strain and emotional expressiveness in understanding of masculinity. This means that men are sometimes seen, or you can say assumed, to be in situations that are repressing for their masculinity. Expressing emotions is also more frequent



in young adults than in older adults. Also, older adults rank masculine characteristics like appearance, planning, egocentricity, materialism, dependence, and aggression higher (Robinson et al., 2002).

It is expected that there will be differences between younger and older men, because previous research suggested looking at this as a moderator after finding differences in negative attitudes toward homosexuality when this was explained in a biological manner and framed as uncontrollable between high gender self-esteem men, and low gender self-esteem and women (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2017). Unfortunately, they have not followed this up yet. However, there has already been found positive generational differences in related topics like the expression of sexual aggression (Anderson et al., 2021), how religion influences the attitude towards abortion (Barringer et al., 2020), and generational differences in the way male gender is expressed (Green, 2019).

There are different ways to conceptualize generations. One way has divided them into the generations of Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Generation Y/Millennials (1981-1996), and Generation Z (1997-2012) (Robinson et al., 2002; Falomir-Pichastor, et al. 2017; Anderson et al., 2021; Barringer et al., 2020; Green, 2019). Although if we look at the generational research altogether, there is an overlap in the names that are used, but not in the times that fit with the name indications. Thus, we focused on the generations Baby Boomers and Generation X (1946-1970), versus Generation Y and Generation Z (1981-2002), thus leaving a gap between the two different generations to avoid overlapping generations in this study.

### **Social identity theory**

We will focus on the aspect of social creativity strategy that is part of the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social creativity strategies are behaviors that increase

positive distinctiveness for the social identity group. This happens in the sense of changing the values of the ingroup, comparing ingroup and outgroup on different aspects, or comparing the ingroup to a different outgroup (Scheifele et al., 2021). Using social creativity strategies is most likely when the intergroup relations are seen as legitimate, stable (Tajfel, 1982) and boundaries are believed to be impermeable (Paulsen et al., 2005). This means in the context of masculinity threat that men who feel overall more positive about their male identity and their perceptions belonging to the male identity, can influence how men will perceive the masculinity threat.

### **The Current Research**

Most research has so far focused on feminization of men as a factor for masculinity threat. Yet, male privilege can be undermined by other ways such as changing family roles, and women gaining more rights, etc. Therefore, in this study, we will focus on a new way to threaten masculinity to fill this gap. Before, studies have focused on the anti-femininity threat dimension which entails that men want to differentiate themselves from gay men (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2017). Thus, this is different from the masculinity threat, which focuses on the change in society where women play a more important role in different areas. Moreover, there is not much research into generational differences of masculinity threat (Robinson et al., 2002). It is important to know whether older adults and young people respond to changing masculinity norms differently. Accordingly, we are interested in how men of different generations react to the threat of masculinity in the form of status-loss. We will focus on three different domains of kinds of reactions: endorsing male role norms, identity management strategies, and emotions to research these effects. The first hypothesis is that older men endorse male role norms more strongly after experiencing a male privilege threat than any other condition.

Most research focused on how people reacted to masculinity threat measuring their emotions or attitudes toward relevant outgroups. In this study, we also focus on identity management strategies because, from a social identity perspective, once an identity is threatened, people seek ways to restore their identity. This is based on the social identity theory to see what affects men experience after they feel threatened (Dahl et al., 2015). Thus, it is hypothesized that older men have other identity management strategies than younger people to restore their male privilege. This is an exploratory hypothesis. We will measure how much men use social creativity to cope with the status threat, but we do not make any specific predictions.

Finally, we will also focus on the experience of negative emotions after feeling threatened. It has been found before that men express more negative attitudes and behaviors (Rivera & Dasgupta, 2018; Willer et al., 2013; Konopka), especially aggression (Talley & Bettencourt, 2008), when feeling threatened. Thus, it is hypothesized that older men will experience more negative emotions in the threat condition in comparison to younger men and older men in the control condition.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Our study consisted of 245 United States citizens that are male ( $M_{age} = 44.23$ ;  $SD_{age} = 17.46$ ). The participants were recruited through Prolific and got a monetary reward in return at the rate of £7.50 per hour. Of the 283 participants that started the study, we included 245. We had a priori criteria to exclude the participants if they failed the attention check ( $n = 5$ ), because they identified as female ( $n = 2$ ), because they were not heterosexual ( $n = 4$ ), because they did fail the manipulation check ( $n = 1$ ), because they guessed what the goal of the study was ( $n = 4$ ), or because they did not finish the questionnaire ( $n = 22$ ). The online program Qualtrics was used to provide the study to the participants. All participants answered the same questions in the same order, but were randomly assigned to a manipulation or control condition. Overall, the participants had a strong male identity ( $M_{id} = 5.66$ ;  $SD_{id} = 1.01$ ). It was determined beforehand that 210 participants were needed through G\*Power (Spearman's rho effect size = .25; alpha = .05; power = .95; numerator df = 1; number of groups = 2). This study had a two-by-two factorial design with the factors male privilege threat (present or absent) and age (younger generation or older generation).

### Procedure and Materials

The study (PSY-2021-S-0191) got ethical approval by the Ethical Committee of Psychology. Before the start of the study, the participants provided informed consent to participate in the study and knew that they could stop participating in the study at any given moment.

After participants had read the informed consent, the participant filled in demographic questions like age, sexuality, race, religion, and economic status. Also, it was determined by the mean of four questions to what extent the participants identified with the male gender (see identification scale described later). After this, the participant was shown an article about

either the physiological differences between men and women (Wikipedia, see Appendix B) in the control condition or how women are becoming more powerful in today's society (Rosin, 2010, see Appendix A) in the manipulation condition to ignite status threat. The manipulation article was adjusted to make it more threatening for the male privilege. After the article, the male role norms, and some questions about emotions, social creativity strategies, and zero sum were asked to fill out.

**Manipulation.** The manipulation was an article about the changing roles of women in society and why they will only become more dominant in society in the future. We assumed that this threatened the male privilege of men. Likely, that men would feel like they were not privileged in society anymore, because of the equality between men and women or even having to look up to women. Next to the manipulation condition, we have a control condition in which half of the participants would be assigned to read an article collected from Wikipedia about human physiological differences between men and women (Wikipedia, see appendix B).

**Norms of traditional masculinity ideology.** The norms of traditional masculinity ideology were measured by the Masculine Role Norms Inventory Short Form (MRNI-SF; Levant et al., 2013). This scale consists of the subscales Restrictive Emotionality (RE) ( $\alpha = .81$ ), Self-Reliance through Mechanical Skills (SR) ( $\alpha = .91$ ), Negativity toward Sexual Minorities (NT) ( $\alpha = .93$ ), Avoidance of Femininity (AF) ( $\alpha = .90$ ), Importance of Sex (IS) ( $\alpha = .90$ ), Dominance (Do) ( $\alpha = .90$ ), and Toughness (T) ( $\alpha = .81$ ). It can be used as separate subscales or overall endorsement of traditional masculine norms. The MRNI-SF contained 21 items ( $\alpha = .95$ ) in total, and each item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Examples of the items that were used are '*The President of the US should always be a man*' and '*Boys should prefer to play with trucks*

*rather than dolls*'. Participants were instructed to show their agreement to describe their current beliefs.

**Social creativity strategies.** Social creativity strategies were measured using 10 items ( $\alpha = .85$ ). The items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Participants were instructed to show their agreement and describe their current feeling. The items were based on the social creativity scale (Scheifele et al., 2021) and were adjusted to fit the perspective of the study. Examples of the items that were used are '*I tell myself that as compared to women, men still have better qualities*' and '*I tell myself that men receive more respect from their children as compared to women.*'. Two of the items were dropped from the analysis, because they did not seem to factor with the rest of the social creativity strategies scale. These items were '*I tell myself that compared to women, men have more freedom in choices*' and '*I tell myself that male leaders often earn more money than their female counterparts*'.

**Emotions.** Emotions were measured by 11 items in total, divided in positive and negative emotions. The positive emotions were *relief, joyful, proud, and happy* ( $\alpha = .89$ ). The negative emotions were *angry, fear of losing status, sad, jealous, fear for the future, and disgust* ( $\alpha = .92$ ). Contempt was also measured, but dropped from the scale because it loaded onto both positive and negative emotions scale in a factor analysis and in the same direction. This could be an online miscommunication. Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Participants were instructed to pick the answer that best described their current feeling.

**Collective activism.** Collective activism was measured by 3 items in total ( $\alpha = .89$ ). The items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Participants were instructed to show their agreement and describe their current feeling towards the action. The items were based on Van Zomeren, et al.'s scale (2012) and were

adjusted to fit the perspective of the study. The three items used in the adapted form are '*Sign a petition supporting the protection of men's rights*', '*Participate in a demonstration supporting the protection of men's rights*' and '*Express support for men around the world in posts on social media such as Twitter or Facebook*'.

**Other variables.** Another dependent variable which was included in the study are attitude toward homosexuality. Because these variables are measured, we can control the effect of self-critical emotions and other focused empathy on the stereotypes, meta-stereotypes, and feelings by these dependent variables to see if the effect changes. These variables fall outside of the scope of this study and will not be reported.

As a potential moderator, we measured zero-sum thinking with the 11 item-zero-sum thinking scale (Rózycka-Tran et al., 2019) ( $\alpha = .89$ ), on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Participants were instructed to give the extent to which they agreed with each statement. Three of the items in the zero-sum thinking scale were adjusted and added in this study to fit the zero-sum thinking in men's privileges. Examples of the items that were used are '*The more money that women earn in the workplace, the less money men earn*' and '*When someone does much for others he or she loses*'.

Besides this, we also included the variable identification to the male gender. Identification as a male was measured by 4 items ( $\alpha = .83$ ), on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Participants were instructed to pick the answer that did most describe their current feeling. An example item is '*I see myself as a member of my gender*' and '*I am pleased to be a man*'. These items were taken from the social identity scale developed by Ellemers and colleagues (2002).

## Results

### Preliminary analyses

For all ANOVAs, the assumption of normality was checked with the Shapiro Wilk test. The assumption of normality was violated ( $SW = .975; p < .001$ ). However, the sample size was greater than 200 ( $n = 245$ ), so it can be assumed that therefore the distribution of residuals will approximate normality. The assumption of homoscedasticity is checked by doing a Levene's test. The variables *identity*, *endorsement of traditional masculinity roles*, *positive emotions*, *negative emotions*, *zero-sum thinking*, and *social creativity* strategies did pass Levene's test. There were no outliers found in the data.

**Endorsement of traditional masculinity roles.** We ran a  $2 \times 2$  between-subjects ANOVA on the endorsement of traditional masculinity. There was a significant main effect found for conditions,  $F(1, 241) = 8.40, p = 0.004, \eta^2p = 0.033$ . People in threat condition endorsed traditional masculinity more ( $M = 3.14, SD = 1.22$ ) as compared to those in the control condition ( $M = 2.69, SD = 1.15$ ). However, there was not a significant main effect of generation,  $F(1, 241) = 2.16, p = 0.14, \eta^2p = 0.012$ . Older men endorsed traditional masculinity ( $M = 3.06, SD = 1.19$ ) similar to younger men ( $M = 2.80, SD = 1.21$ ). Moreover, there was a significant interaction effect of generation and condition,  $F(1, 241) = 4.16, p = 0.043, \eta^2p = 0.02$ . Older men in the threat condition endorsed traditional masculinity ( $M = 3.39, SD = 1.17$ ) much more strongly as compared to other groups.

This means that there was a difference found in endorsing traditional masculinity roles by men who experienced male privilege threat and men who did not experience male privilege threat, and between generations. Older men who experienced a male privilege threat endorsed traditional masculinity roles more strongly in comparison to men who did not experience a male privilege threat ( $M = 2.69, SD = 1.15$ ). Thus, the hypothesis that older men



endorse more traditional masculinity roles in the threat condition in comparison to all other conditions is supported.

An explorative analysis was done to see if there were any differences between the groups for each subscale of the MRNI-SF, Restrictive Emotionality (RE), Self-Reliance through Mechanical Skills (SR), Negativity toward Sexual Minorities (NT), Avoidance of Femininity (AF), Importance of Sex (IS), Dominance (Do), and Toughness (T). Self-reliance through mechanical skills had a significant main effect between conditions ( $F(1, 241) = 17.69; p < 0.001; \eta^2p = 0.07$ ). Men in the threat condition endorsed more self-reliance through mechanical skills in comparison to men in the control condition. There was found a significant main effect between generations for negativity toward sexual minorities ( $F(1, 241) = 9.99; p = 0.002; \eta^2p = 0.04$ ). Thus, older men endorsed more negativity toward sexual minorities in comparison to younger men. For avoidance of femininity, a main effect between both condition ( $F(1, 241) = 6.20; p = 0.013; \eta^2p = 0.03$ ) and generation ( $F(1, 241) = 6.48; p = 0.012; \eta^2p = 0.03$ ) was found. This means that older men endorsed more avoidance of femininity in comparison to younger men. On top of that, men in the threat condition endorsed more avoidance of femininity in comparison to men in the control condition. An interaction effect was found for importance of sex ( $F(1, 241) = 9.73; p = 0.002; \eta^2p = 0.04$ ). This means that older men endorse interest of sex more than younger men, if they feel threatened. Toughness also has an interaction effect ( $F(1, 241) = 4.57; p = 0.034; \eta^2p = 0.02$ ). Thus, older men endorse toughness more than younger men, if they feel threatened. Both restrictive emotionality and dominance did not yield any significant results.

### **Collective activism.**

We performed two 2x2 between subjects ANOVAs with the factors male privilege threat and generation on both social creativity strategies and collective activism. For social creativity strategies, there was no significant main effect of condition ( $F(1, 241) = 0.96; p =$

0.22;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$ ), or generation ( $F(1, 241) = 0.21$ ;  $p = 0.64$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$ ), nor was there a significant interaction effect ( $F(1, 241) = 0.05$ ;  $p = 0.82$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$ ). This does not support the hypothesis that older men have other identity management strategies than younger people to restore their male privilege. Thus, when men experience a male privilege threat, they will not take action to use any social creativity strategies to make them feel better or gain back their male privilege threat.

### **Emotions.**

To see if there was a difference between the groups, we performed a two-way ANOVA with the factors male privilege threat and generation on both positive and negative emotions. There was a significant main effect found for negative emotions between generations ( $F(1, 241) = 7.02$ ;  $p = 0.009$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$ ). Thus, younger men ( $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) experienced more negative emotions than older men ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ). There was also a significant main effect found for negative emotions between threat conditions ( $F(1, 241) = 4.91$ ;  $p = 0.028$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.018$ ). Thus, men in the threat condition ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ) experienced more negative emotions than men in the control condition ( $M = 2.26$ ;  $SD = 1.13$ ). However, there was no interaction between condition and generation found for negative emotions ( $F(1, 241) = 1.10$ ;  $p = 0.296$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.004$ ). Thus, the hypothesis that older men will experience more negative emotions in the threat condition in comparison to younger men and older men in the control condition was not supported.

For positive emotions, there was a significant main effect for generation ( $F(1, 241) = 8.23$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.031$ ). Thus, also for positive emotions, younger men ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) experienced more positive emotions than older men ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). This main effect was not found between threat conditions ( $F(1, 241) = 2.51$ ;  $p = 0.114$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.011$ ). On top of that, there was not an interaction found between generation and condition for positive emotions ( $F(1, 241) = 0.004$ ;  $p = 0.949$ ;  $\eta_p^2 = 0.000$ ). Thus, younger men will experience

more positive emotions in the control condition in comparison to older men and younger men in the threat condition. However, it is interesting to see that younger men experience more positive emotions in comparison to older men in both the conditions. It might be that younger men are more understanding of the situation and more confronted by the situation to understand both sides of the changing society better than older men. Thus, experience both more positive and negative emotions when confronted with either physiological or societal differences between men and women.

Table 1

*Means and standard deviations across conditions of all reported dependent variables*

Dependent variable	Younger control condition Mean (SD)	Older control Condition Mean (SD)	Younger threat condition Mean (SD)	Older threat condition Mean (SD)
Endorsing traditional masculinity	2.73 (1.22)	2.65 (1.08)	2.86 (1.21)	3.39 (1.17)
Negative emotions	2.35 (1.13)	2.15 (1.12)	2.90 (1.27)	2.28 (1.23)
Positive emotions	3.53 (1.15)	3.19 (1.06)	3.31 (0.90)	2.93 (1.09)
Collective activism	2.62 (1.80)	2.43 (1.99)	2.62 (1.84)	2.18 (1.47)
Social creativity strategies	2.20 (1.06)	2.16 (1.17)	2.38 (1.35)	2.41 (1.23)

## Discussion

The aim of this study is to look at the effects of masculinity threat and generational differences on the endorsement of traditional masculinity, emotions, and identity management strategies. Our first hypothesis that older men would endorse more traditional masculinity roles in the threat condition in comparison to the other conditions was supported by this study. There was a significant interaction effect found for older men in the masculinity threat condition. Thus, we can conclude based on our data that men belonging to the older generation are affected mostly by masculinity threat in comparison to younger men who experience a masculinity threat or all men who do not experience any masculinity threat. There is already evidence that men who feel that their masculinity is threatened experience more negative emotions and endorse more typical masculine behaviors (Konopka et al., 2019; Dahl et al., 2015), but it has not been studied before if there is a generational difference at play. However, there is evidence that older generations have different views than younger generations on what masculine characteristics are (Robinson et al., 2002), the expression of sexual aggression (Anderson et al., 2021), and the expression of male gender (Green, 2019). This is the first generational study that focuses on masculinity threats and their effects.

The second hypothesis that older men have other identity management strategies than younger people to restore their male privilege was not supported. There was no data that supported that men who experience a masculinity threat would take action differently than younger men who experience masculinity threat. It was also not found that men who experience a masculinity threat opposed to men who do not experience a masculinity threat are willing to use identity management strategies to restore their social identity. It might be that this is a limitation in the study that men felt that the threat was not strong enough to take action to restore their social identity, because their identity was not severely enough affected. It could also be that men use different identity management strategies than social creativity or

collective action. We did not test how severe people were affected by this threat, because that could have given away the cause of the study and affected different aspects of the study. It might also be that the masculinity threat used was not strong enough in order for men to take action. Thus, there would be more evidence needed that an article is a masculinity threat for men to take action into identity management strategies. It could thus be that the used masculinity threat falls more in the gray area for most people, thus not affecting the identity of men (Edwards, 2016). We have not checked what it means for the participants to identify to the male gender. This could also be a limitation. Thus, in future research, we should gather data on the differences in the concept of the male gender between generations.

The third hypothesis that older men will experience more negative emotions in the threat condition in comparison to older men in the control condition and younger men overall was also not supported. The data supported that younger men experienced more negative emotions than older men. Also, men in the masculinity threat condition experienced more negative emotions than men in the control condition. So, no interaction effect was found, but there were two main effects. As previous research supports, men experience more negative emotions when they feel that their masculinity is threatened (Dahl et al., 2015). Thus, our data supports the main effect that men who experience that their masculinity is threatened experience more negative emotions than men who did not experience any masculinity threat. We did however expect that older men would experience even more negative emotions, based on the research that men do have generational differences in their views of masculinity, with older men being more conservative in their beliefs (Anderson et al., 2021; Barringer et al., 2020; Green, 2019; Robinson et al., 2002). But on the other hand, it has also been shown that younger men show their emotions more frequently (Robinson et al., 2002). Thus, it could be that we measured the actual outing of negative emotions instead of the feelings experienced by the participants. This could explain the difference in experiencing negative emotions

between younger and older men. However, it is uncertain to say if we actually measured that. Future research should take into consideration that experiencing negative emotion and actually outing them could be two completely separate things.

As mentioned before, it could be a limitation that this study contained a lot of different concepts. For future research, it would be interesting to focus on less concepts, but in more depth. As it is mentioned that the article used for the masculinity threat condition should be tested in a pilot study to gather data if the article actually induces a threat that challenges men's' male gender identity. This data could be useful to see beforehand if this threat is the right threat for researching the concept of identity management strategies. Also, more focus should be on the limitation that generations can differentiate between the interpretation of feeling a certain emotion. This could be interpreted as actually expressing it because you have to think about it and fill it into a questionnaire or it could be feeling it, conscious or subconscious. Next to this, there could also be a difference between generations in how conscious men are in their emotions. Older men might have a harder time making sense and expressing their emotions than younger men.

Another limitation can be that we do not know the participants' view on women before the research started or the encounters with women shortly before they participated in the online study. It could be that some men experienced minor negative or positive encounters with women just before the study or that they have an extremely negative or positive view on women based on major life events in their whole life. This does not have to be a problem, because it was made sure that the power of the study was high enough to find a certain effect that has a low probability of being a false positive. Also, it is unrealistic to control for this, because everyone experiences major and minor life events that shape your view and identity.

Next to this, this was the first study done on the generational differences and masculinity threats on the endorsement of male role norms. There have been studies done on generational differences in relation to other topics (Anderson et al., 2021; Barringer et al., 2020; Green, 2019; Robinson et al., 2002), and there have been studies about the effects of masculinity threats on endorsement of male role norms (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2019; Konopka et al., 2019; Dahl et al., 2015). However, the combination together is completely new. This calls for more replications of the study to show consistency of the effects found in this study. The last limitation is that there was a US sample used. Thus, generalization can only be towards the US population. It is yet to study if the effects still hold in different contexts and populations.

The finding that older men endorse more traditional masculinity roles when experiencing something that is threatening to masculinity compared to younger men and not experiencing this, can have a negative effect on the society that is changing. The fact that society is changing and being reminded of this can trigger these negative attitudes and behaviors in older men. This can mean for women wanting to work after their children left their home and parents get their independence and freedom back, the husband would feel threatened by the wife getting more responsibilities outside of the home, while the husband gets more responsibilities in domestic tasks. As has been found before, these behaviors and attitudes can be in more negative feelings like anger and sadness (Dahl et al., 2015) and in more stereotypical masculine attitudes and behaviors (Konopka et al., 2019). One specific result can be aggression towards the wife in this example. Thus, it could eventually lead to domestic tensions and violence. In the workplace it could also be negative. With mainly older men at the top of companies and being in leadership positions, this could lead to wanting to create a bigger gap between men and women (Konopka et al., 2019), by for example, giving men more business opportunities and endorsing the gender pay gap. Next to this, it could also lead to sexual harassment in the workplace (Dahl et al., 2015). Communicating this

ideological dominance towards women in any sense, at home, in the workplace, and in the general way of living, has negative effects on women (Dahl et al., 2015; Swim 2001; Cheryan 2009) by undermining performance, reducing resources, opportunity, and power and status.

In conclusion, the findings of our study indicate that generational differences play a role in endorsing male role norms. Next to this, the experience of negative emotions differs also between generations. However, identity management strategies tend to play a smaller role in restoring the male identity. With these findings, we can better explain and understand the expressions of emotions and the attitude men have after experiencing a masculinity threat. With the different styles of coping, further research can also focus on the effects of these coping mechanisms.



## References

- Alruwayshid, M. S., Alduraywish, S. A., Allafi, A. H., Alshuniefi, A. S., Alaraik, E. F., Alreshidi, F., Almughais, E., & Alruwayshid, N. S. (2021). The influence of social media on body dissatisfaction among college students. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, *10*(4), 1741–1746. [https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmmpc.jfmmpc\\_1529\\_20](https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmmpc.jfmmpc_1529_20)
- Amnesty International. (2022). *Women's Rights*. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/discrimination/womens-rights/>
- Anderson, P. B., Struckman-Johnson, C., & Smeaton, G. L. (2021). Generation by gender differences in use of sexual aggression: a replication of the millennial shift. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *58*(3), 383–395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2020.1733457>
- Barringer, M. N., Sumerau, J. E., & Gay, D. A. (2020). Generational variation in young adults' attitudes toward legal abortion: contextualizing the role of religion. *Social Currents*, *7*(3), 279–296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496520905020>
- Borras Guevara, M. L., & West, K. (2021). Masculinity threat: understanding why Jamaican men report more anti-gay prejudice than Jamaican women. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *30*(3), 292–305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1842178>
- Dahl, J., Vescio, T., & Weaver, K. (2015). How threats to masculinity sequentially cause public discomfort, anger, and ideological dominance over women. *Social Psychology*, *46*(4), 242–254. <https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1027/1864-9335/a000248>
- Edwards, T. (2016). The Classical Tradition. In T. Edwards (Ed.) *Men in the mirror : men's fashion, masculinity and consumer society* (pp. 24-38). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). Self and social identity. *Annu Rev Psychol.*, *53*, 161-86. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135228. PMID: 11752483.
- Falomir-Pichastor, J. M., Berent, J., & Anderson, J. (2019). Perceived men's feminization and attitudes toward homosexuality: heterosexual men's reactions to the decline of the anti-

femininity norm of masculinity. *Sex Roles : A Journal of Research*, 81(3-4), 208–222.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0985-6>

Falomir-Pichastor, J. M., Mugny, G., & Berent, J. (2017). The side effect of egalitarian norms: reactive group distinctiveness, biological essentialism, and sexual prejudice. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 20(4), 540–558. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430215613843>

Green, A., & McClelland, C. (2019). Male Gender Expression Conflict Between Baby Boomers and Millennials. *Pepperdine Journal of Communication Research*, 7(6).

Hunt, L. (2015), The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, August 1789: A Revolutionary Document. *Revolutionary Moments : Reading Revolutionary Texts*, Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 77–84, doi:10.5040/9781474252669.0016

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and Stockholm University (2009). *Gender quotas database*. IDEA. <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/quotas#concepts>

Kingstone, H. (2021). Generational identities: historical and literary perspectives. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 15(10). <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12641>

Konopka, K., Rajchert, J., Dominiak-Kochanek, M., & Roszak, J. (2019). The role of masculinity threat in homonegativity and transphobia. *Journal of Homosexuality*. <https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1080/00918369.2019.1661728>

Levant, R. F., Hall, R. J., & Rankin, T. J. (2013) Male Role Norms Inventory Short Form (MRNI-SF): Development, Confirmatory Factor Analytic Investigation of Structure, and Measurement Invariance Across Gender. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031545>

Maor, M. (2019). Masculinities in the middle: Policing of masculinity, and the central and marginal roles of adolescent boys in adult martial art groups. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 36(1), 97–105. <https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1123/ssj.2018-0003>

- Michniewicz, K. S., Bosson, J. K., Lenex, J. G., & Chen, J. I. (2014). Gender-atypical mental illness as male gender threat. *American Journal of Men's Health*, *10*(4), 306–317.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988314567224>
- Paulsen, N., Jones, E. L., Graham, P. W., Callan, V. J., & Gallois, C. (2005). Organizations as intergroup contexts: Communication, discourse, and identification. In J. Harwood & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 165–188). Peter Lang.
- Robinson, J. M., Johnson, A. L., Benton, S. L., Janey, B. A., Cabral, J., & Woodford, J. A. (2002). What's in a picture? Comparing gender constructs of younger and older adults. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, *11*(1), 1–27. <https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.3149/jms.1101.1>
- Rosin, H. (2010, July/August). The End of Men. *The Atlantic*.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/07/the-end-of-men/308135/>
- Scheifele, C., Van, L. C., Ehrke, F., Steffens, M. C., & Viladot, M. A. (2021). Testing the basic socio-structural assumptions of social identity theory in the gender context: evidence from correlational studies on women's leadership. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, (2021).  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2678>
- Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *33*, 1–39. <https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1146/annurev.ps.33.020182.00024>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.) *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
- UN Women. (2020). *Visualizing the data: Women's representation in society*. UN Women.  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2020/2/infographic-visualizing-the-data-womens-representation>
- Van Zomeren, M., Leach, C. W., & Spears, R. (2012). Protesters as “passionate economists” a dynamic dual pathway model of approach coping with collective disadvantage. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *16*(2), 180-199.

Vandello, J. A., Bosson, J. K., Cohen, D., Burnaford, R. M., & Weaver, J. R. (2008). Precarious manhood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(6), 1325–1339.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012453>

Wikipedia. (2021). *Sex differences in human physiology*.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex\\_differences\\_in\\_human\\_physiology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_differences_in_human_physiology)

## Appendix A

### Manipulation article

#### **The End of Men**

*Earlier this year, women became the majority of the workforce for the first time in U.S. history. Most managers are now women too. And for every two men who get a college degree this year, three women will do the same. For years, women's progress has been cast as a struggle for equality. But what if equality isn't the end point? What if modern, postindustrial society is simply better suited to women? A report on the unprecedented role reversal now under way— and its vast cultural consequences*

HANNA ROSIN

JULY/AUGUST 2020 ISSUE

“The End of Men”? This is not a title; it is a sound bite. But I mean it. The revolution feminists have been waiting for is happening now, before our very eyes. Men are losing their grip, patriarchy is crumbling and we are reaching “the end of 200,000 years of human history and the beginning of a new era” in which women — and womanly skills and traits — are on the rise. Women around the world are increasingly dominant in work, education, households; even in love and marriage. But is that a good thing for our society?

Man has been the dominant sex since the dawn of mankind. But for the first time in human history, that is changing—and with shocking speed. Cultural and economic changes always reinforce each other. And the global economy is evolving in a way that is eroding the historical preference for male children, worldwide. Over several centuries, South Korea, for instance, constructed one of the most rigid patriarchal societies in the world. Many wives who failed to produce male heirs were abused and treated as domestic servants; some families prayed to spirits to kill off girl children. Then, in the 1970s and '80s, the government

embraced an industrial revolution and encouraged women to enter the labor force. Women moved to the city and went to college. They advanced rapidly, from industrial jobs to clerical jobs to professional work. The traditional order began to crumble soon after. In 1990, the country's laws were revised so that women could keep custody of their children after a divorce and inherit property. In 2005, the court ruled that women could register children under their own names. As recently as 1985, about half of all women in a national survey said they "must have a son." That percentage fell slowly until 1991 and then plummeted to just over 15 percent by 2003. Male preference in South Korea "is over," says Monica Das Gupta, a demographer and Asia expert at the World Bank. "It happened so fast. It's hard to believe it, but it is." The same shift is now beginning in other rapidly industrializing countries such as India and China.

Over the years, researchers have sometimes exaggerated differences between men and women and described the particular talents of women in crude gender stereotypes: women as more empathetic, as better consensus-seekers and better lateral thinkers; women as bringing a superior moral sensibility to bear on a cutthroat business world. But after the latest financial crisis, these ideas have more resonance. Researchers have started looking into the relationship between testosterone and excessive risk, and wondering if groups of men, in some basic hormonal way, spur each other to make reckless decisions. The picture emerging is a mirror image of the traditional gender map: men and markets on the side of the irrational and overemotional, and women on the side of the cool and level headed.

What if we were all wrong? What if women have been preparing themselves for this day? But what if equality isn't the end point? We will see what will happen as men continue to lose their status and power in society across the world.

HANNA ROSIN *is a contributing writer at The Atlantic and the author of The End of Men, which is based on her story in the July/August 2010 issue of The Atlantic.*

## **Appendix B**

### **Control article**

#### **Sex differences in human physiology**

Sex differences in human physiology are distinctions of physiological characteristics associated with either male or female humans. These can be of several types, including direct and indirect. Direct being the direct result of differences prescribed by the Y-chromosome, and indirect being a characteristic influenced indirectly (e.g. hormonally) by the Y-chromosome. Sexual dimorphism is a term for the phenotypic difference between males and females of the same species.

Direct sex differences follow a bimodal distribution. Through the process of meiosis and fertilization (with rare exceptions), each individual is created with zero or one Y-chromosome. The complementary result for the X-chromosome follows, either a double or a single X. Therefore, direct sex differences are usually binary in expression (although the deviations in complex biological processes produce a menagerie of exceptions). These include, most conspicuously, male (vs female) gonads.

Indirect sex differences are general differences as quantified by empirical data and statistical analysis. Most differing characteristics will conform to a bell-curve (i.e. normal) distribution which can be broadly described by the mean (peak distribution) and standard deviation (indicator of size of range). Often only the mean or mean difference between sexes is given. This may or may not preclude overlap in distributions. For example, most males are taller than most females, but an individual female could be taller than an individual male.

The most obvious differences between males and females include all the features related to reproductive role, notably the endocrine (hormonal) systems and their physiological

and behavioural effects, including gonadal differentiation, internal and external genital and breast differentiation, and differentiation of muscle mass, height, and hair distribution.