The Role of Father’s Masculinity on Relationship Transitions

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Current Study
Objectives:
• Use cluster analysis to examine diverging masculinity
• Describe different types of relationship transitions by multiple forms of masculinity
• Examine if masculinity predicts transitioning into less committed relationships
• Test whether race or participation in various social institutions mediates the association between masculinity and relationship transitions

Theoretical Framework
Masculinity and family research:
• Traditional account
  ○ All-encompassing, ahistorical approach (Nock 1998; Townsend 2002)
  ○ Idealized view of masculinity
  ○ Marker of comparison
  • “Package deal” of masculinity: work, marriage, home and children (Townsend 2002)
• Critical feminist account
  ○ Change over time: intersects with race and class (Connell 2005; Hamer 2001; Kimmell 2006)
  • Hyper-masculine: violent, controlling behavior
  • Contemporary: nurture, material caregiving

Masculinity in Previous Fragile Families Research
• Majority of research only examines a few individual measures. For example:
  ○ Supportive attitudes towards fathering (Cabrera et al. 2008; Carlson et al. 2008; Wilder- man 2008)
  ○ Emotional control (Woldoff & Cina 2007; Woldoff & Washington 2008)
  • Gender mistrust (Carlson et al. 2004; Waller & Swisher 2006)
  • But, no research to date has combined variables to classify men into multiple forms of masculinity

Factors Associated with Relationship Transitions
• Race: Blacks less likely to marry than Whites (Carlson et al. 2004)
• Income: Higher levels of economic security increase likelihood of marrying among cohabiting couples and reduce chances of separation (Osborne 2005; Osborne et al. 2007)
• Incarceration: Reduces chances of co-residing with baby’s mother by about half (Westen & McLarenan 2000)
• Religious Participation: Father’s church attendance increases the likelihood of being married to the baby’s mother (Wilcox & Woffinger 2006)
• Military: Increases likelihood of being married (Lundquist 2004; Teachman 2007)
• Relationship Status at Birth: Children born to married parents have greater parental stability compared to unmarried parents (Osborne et al. 2007; Osborne & McLarenan 2007)
• Parental Relationship Quality: Higher quality relationships less likely to separate and more likely to transition into a more committed relationship (Carlson et al. 2004)

Data and Method
• Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study (N=1,303)
  ○ Cohort study of 5,000 children born in large U.S. cities, baseline collected 1998 – 2000
  ○ Restricted to Black and White fathers only with baseline, year one and five interviews
• Method
  ○ Cluster analysis to create masculinity typologies
  ○ Logistic regression
  • Predicting those who transitioned into a lesser committed relationship
  • Excluded category fathers who did not transition and fathers who transitioned into a relationship marked by greater commitment

Masculinity Measures
• Supportive attitudes towards fathering
• Emotional control
• Emotional availability to baby’s mother
• Equitarian gender role attitudes
  ○ Important decisions in family should be made by man of the house
  ○ Fathers play more important role in raising boys than raising girls
• Mother’s relative earnings
• Gender mistrust
• Abusive behavior
• Conflict – number of disagreements

Cluster Analysis Results
• Contemporary masculinity: group of fathers characterized by what may be considered “positive” aspects of masculinity
  ○ Those that are emotionally available, have supportive attitudes towards fathering, have few disagreements with their baby’s mother, have little to no abusive behavior, and are not distrustful of women
• Hyper-masculine masculinity: group of fathers characterized by “negative” aspects of masculinity
  ○ Those who exert abusive/controlling behavior towards women, are highly distrustful of women, and show little signs of emotional control or emotional availability
• Traditional masculinity: group of fathers showing slightly more complicated pattern of masculinity
  ○ Majority of masculinity measures fall in between contemporary and hyper-masculine

Relationship Transitions Results

Major Findings
• Most common type of relationship is continuously married, with contemporary fathers being most likely to be continuously married at baseline and year-five
• Dramatic variation in relationship types across masculinity
• Hyper-masculinity positively predicts transitioning into a lower committed relationship
• Education and economic hardship are the only measures of social institutional ties associated with moving into a lower committed relationship

Conclusions
• Relationships do differ by type of masculinity
• Hyper-masculine fathers are more likely to transition into lesser committed relationships
• Race and social institutions do not fully mediate the association between masculinity and relationship transitions

Limitations
• Small number of hyper-masculine fathers transitioning into more committed relationships
• Collapsing of relationship categories