

An Intersectional Analysis of Manhood and Masculinity Ideology through Race/Ethnicity and Sexual Orientation

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Abstract

The present study investigates how intersectional facets of men's identity relate to their understanding of manhood and masculinity. Quantitative ratings of gender stereotype traits and gendered self-views were collected in addition to men's endorsement of precarious manhood beliefs. A qualitative portion of analyses investigates men's perceptions of behaviors that society deems unmanly, ways men can affirm their manhood in society, and how men have restored their own sense of manhood. These results will offer a more nuanced understanding of how men interpret masculinity, especially in relation to their identities and culture.

Introduction

Gender stereotypes are rooted in social role theory and the fundamental dimensions of agency and communion (Eagly, 1987; Bakan, 1966). Based on the subordinate male target hypothesis, social comparison and self-categorization theories, and principles of prototypicality, diverse men's gender stereotype ratings will differ in relation to their unique intersectional identities (**Hypothesis 1**).

Gendered self-views reflect understandings of gender stereotypes and relate to developmental theories in psychology (Cross et al., 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). According to social comparison theory and social dominance orientation, diverse men will be aware of the influence that their identity has on their social interactions and show dissimilar self-construal ratings from their counterparts (**Hypothesis 2**).

The precarious manhood hypothesis reflects the universal belief that manhood is a turbulent status that is hard to gain and easy to lose and one that requires constant demonstration of masculinity in social environments (Gilmore, 1990; Vandello et al., 2008). Principles of social dominance orientation and the subordinate male target hypothesis suggest that diverse men feel more pressure to adhere to gender norms and would endorse precarious manhood beliefs to a greater extent than others (**Hypothesis 3**).

Method

Participants

- Male undergraduate students ($n = 1,083$) from Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, and the United States were recruited as part of the Towards Gender Harmony cross-cultural study on gender stereotypes.
- Most participants ($M = 23.77$, $SD = 8.90$) were from Ireland, the United States, Australia, Canada, and England.
- Approximately 70% of participants identified as White and 86% identified as heterosexual in total.

Procedure

- Participants completed a 25-minute survey where they rated how well a set of 48 adjectives described the average man (descriptive gender stereotypes), the ideal man (prescriptive gender stereotypes), and themselves (self-construal). These adjectives categorize four constructs: agency, communion, dominance, and weakness.
- Participants also completed ratings on four items measuring their endorsement of precarious manhood beliefs.
- Three open-ended questions asked about behaviors that are unmanly in their culture, how manhood can be reaffirmed, and how these men have personally restored their sense of manhood following a perceived threat.

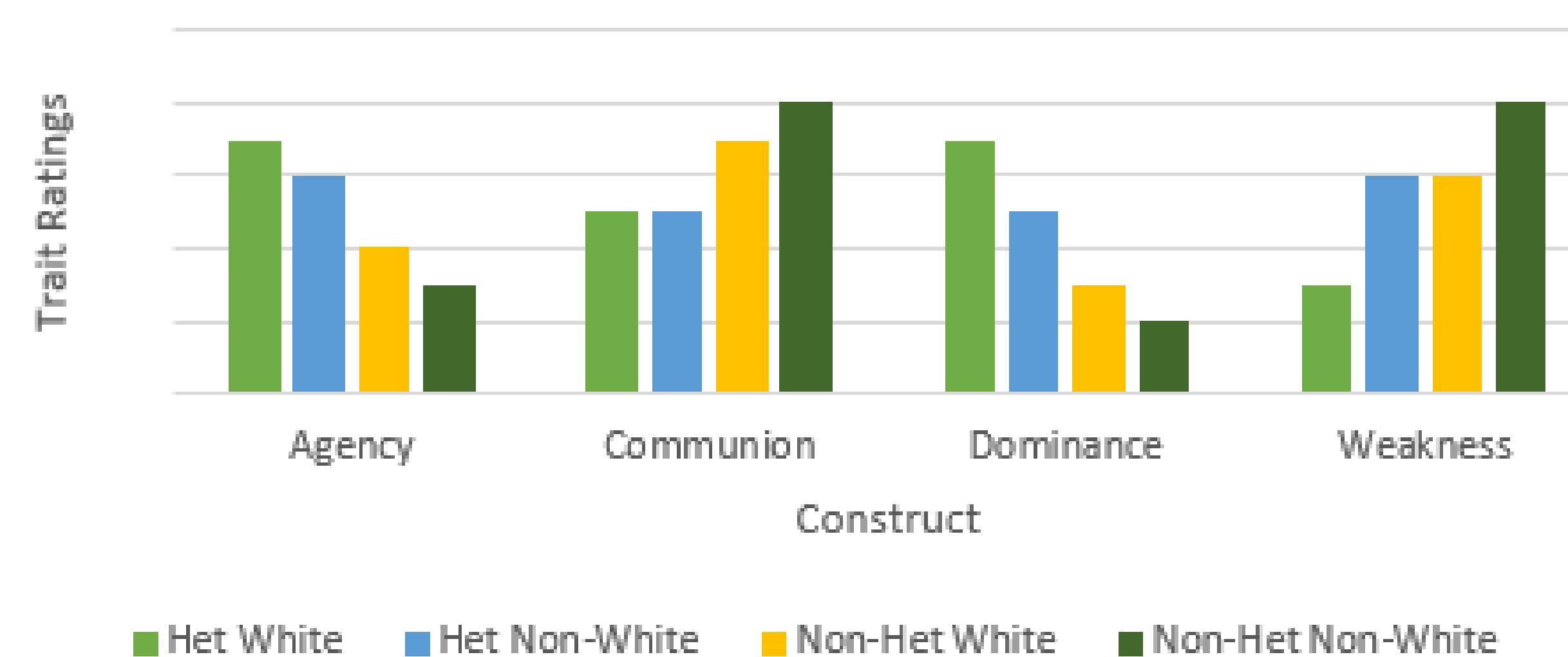
Results

According to research hypotheses, results will show that men with two marginalized identities (non-White, non-heterosexual) will differ from others who only share one or none of these non-dominant identities. These differences will emerge across descriptive and prescriptive/proscriptive gender stereotype trait ratings, self-construal ratings, and ratings of precarious manhood belief endorsement. The greatest differences are expected in self-construal ratings due to the lived experiences of diverse men and aspects of social comparison theory, which is modeled in an example predicted figure below.

While primary quantitative analyses treat race/ethnicity (White vs non-White) and sexual orientation (heterosexual vs non-heterosexual) in a binary fashion, exploratory analyses aim to highlight differences within marginalized subcategories to provide nuanced findings (e.g., breaking the large non-White group into Black, Asian, and Hispanic subgroups).

Thematic coding will reveal differences in how groups of men describe what is manly in their culture, how manliness is defined and protected in their culture, and describe how they personally responded to perceived manhood threat. Specific themes, such as viewing homosexuality as unmanly, are expected to be more readily expressed in some groups of men than others as well in men from certain countries.

Figure 1: Predicted Pattern of Self-Construal Construct Trait Ratings by Race/Ethnicity and Sexual Orientation



Unique Contributions

This research:

- Compares understandings of gender stereotypes and self-construal from diverse men from multiple Westernized countries.
- Provides intersectional information about how race/ethnicity and sexual orientation relate to the precarious manhood hypothesis.
- Describes how diverse men understand and defend manliness in their given culture.
- Prioritizes how diverse men perceive themselves and others over how they are perceived by others.

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