Positive Psychology: An Empirical Examination of Beneficial Aspects
of Endorsement of Masculine Norms

Keywords: men, masculinity, positive psychology, strengths, resilience

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Abstract

This study explored the relations among North American masculine norms, positive psychology strengths, and psychological well-being in a sample of 250 men ranging in age from 18 to 79. Results indicate that men's greater endorsement of traditional Western masculine norms such as risk-taking, dominance, primacy of work, and pursuit of status, was associated with higher levels of personal courage, autonomy, endurance, and resilience. However, conformity to the norms of winning, emotional control, self-reliance, and pursuit of status was associated with lower levels of personal courage, grit, personal control, autonomy, and resilience. Directions for future research and implications for practice are provided.

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Over the past 30 years, scholars in the psychology of men have documented the multitude

of negative outcomes associated with White, North American traditional masculine gender roles.

For example, empirical research has found that men who conform in thought, affect, and action

to currently dominant ("hegemonic") masculine norms are more violent and aggressive (Locke &

Mahalik, 2005), more tolerant of sexual harassment (Glomb & Espelage, 2005), more likely to

abuse substances (Monk & Ricciardelli, 2003), and less likely to engage in health-promoting

behaviors (Mahalik, Lagan, & Morrison, 2006). Indeed, the "dark side" of traditional Western

conceptions of masculinity has been well documented (see below for a discussion of the cultural

variability of masculinity; O'Neil, 2008). This consistent attention has led to significant gains in

contextual understanding of the problems men face due to the restrictions of their socialized

gender roles (Addis & Mahalik, 2003).

The deficit model in the psychological study of women historically pathologized women

according to an androcentric framework, leading to the unintentional reinforcement of low self-

esteem in girls and women (Young-Eisendrath & Wiedemann, 1990). It was only with the

acknowledgement of women's strengths, such as emotional expressiveness, that a more holistic

and empathetic understanding of women came to the fore. Likewise, focusing only on what is

wrong with men may obscure a balanced, data-based understanding of the effects of men's

endorsement and/or deviation from traditional masculine norms. This lack of empirical

knowledge may limit mental health professionals' ability to knowledgably consult with men

about their stances toward societal norms regarding masculinity and the possible implications for

their lives. In turn, this risks perpetuating men's well-known reluctance to seek professional

psychological help (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Furthermore, as Kiselica, Englar-Carlson, Horne, and Fischer (2008) assert, there may be therapeutic utility in promoting healthy forms of masculinity.

Empirical evidence from the prevention and positive psychology literatures suggests that, while a focus on suffering and its alleviation is essential, a focus on building strengths is valuable in its own right (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005; Seligman, 2008; Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006). Bolstering strengths appears to counter disorders, inoculate against future disorders, and increase present subjective well-being (Duckworth et al., 2005; Gable & Haidt, 2005). For example, research has shown that resilient individuals experience more positive emotions (Block & Kremen, 1996; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), which in turn buffer individuals from stress and depression (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003), lead to the more rapid dissipation of negative emotion (Fredrickson, 1998), and increase creative and accurate thinking (Fredrickson, 2001; Isen, 2005). Furthermore, psychotherapy effectiveness research suggests that the common factors (Lambert & Ogles, 2004), which account for a large percentage of psychotherapy benefits, are partially composed of strategies such as building hope (Snyder, Illardi, Michael, & Cheavens, 2000), and clients' strengths such as courage, optimism, authenticity, perseverance, realism, and personal responsibility (Seligman, 2002). Notably, it appears that individuals' strengths can be augmented via relatively simple, cost-effective interventions, some of which can be implemented over the internet (Duckworth et al., 2005; Seligman et al., 2006).

Reflecting these realities, the broader field of psychology is increasingly embracing strength based-perspectives (Smith, 2006), a strategy that Chen, Englar-Carlson, Stevens, and Oren (2009) also recommend for practitioners working with men—fathers in particular. Chen

and colleagues assert that a deficit model limits practitioners' ability to "develop empathy toward fathers, establish rapport, and effectively utilize fathers' strengths in their interventions" (p. 27). Instead, a focus on building strengths can broaden a male client's understanding of his masculinity, increase his sense of self-efficacy, and restore his pride (Levant, 1995). While some scholars express discomfort with the idea of reifying the social constructions of masculinity, men are invested in defining and living in accordance with their acquired understanding of masculinity, from which they derive a sense of meaning and identity (Smiler, 2006). In short, the concept of masculinity is very real to them, and therefore likely serves as a useful frame of discussion when working with men. Some may view deconstruction of masculine gender roles as ideal. However, in therapeutic practice, it is essential to meet clients where they are.

This notion is underscored by APA's (2002) *Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change* that encourage culturally-sensitive practitioners to attune their interventions to their clients' unique worldview by incorporating understanding of clients' cultural backgrounds. Applied to gender-sensitive therapy with men, employing interventions that respect the unique gendered worldview of male clients is likely beneficial (Brooks, 1998; Good & Wood, 1995; Mansfield, Addis & Mahalik, 2003; McCarthy & Holliday, 2004; Robertson, 2001). Indeed, the failure to work within the client's conceptualization of masculinity risks multicultural incompetence (Liu, 2005). Reflecting the views discussed earlier, Levant (1992) stated that while it may be optimal if men rejected the idea of the male gender role and its concomitant stereotypes, the "collapse of traditional masculinity has resulted in defensiveness and demoralization" (p. 384). Levant (1995, 1996, 1997) posits that reconstructing masculinity, in which a positive image of masculinity that can restore men's self-respect is developed, would be a prudent course of action. Scholars echo

Levant's sentiments, calling for the acknowledgment, identification, study, and promotion of the

positive aspects—the strengths—of masculinity (Barwick, 2004; Cochran, 2005; Hershenson,

Power, & Seligman, 1989; Kelly & Hall, 1992; Kiselica et al., 2008; O'Neil, 2008; Oren, Englar-

Carlson, Stevens, Oren, 2009; Smiler, 2004; Wester & Lyubelsky, 2005; Wong & Rochlen,

2008).

Following this line of thought, one might wonder, "What are the positive aspects of

traditional Western conceptualizations of masculinity?" Levant (1992) offers several attributes:

A man's willingness to set aside his own needs for the sake of his family; his

ability to withstand hardship and pain to protect others; his tendency to take care

of people and solve their problems as if they were his own; his way of expressing

love by doing things for others; his loyalty, dedication and commitment; his stick-

to-it-ive-ness and will hang in until a situation is corrected; and his abilities to

solve problems, think logically, and rely on himself, take risks, stay calm in the

face of danger, and assert himself" (p. 385).

This list of positive attributes was supplemented by Kiselica and colleagues (2008) who added:

daring, courage, sacrifice, heroism, risk-taking, humor, healthy self-reliance, action empathy,

male ways of caring, worker-provider tradition, the group orientation of men, and generative

fatherhood. In a literature review of fathers' strengths, Chen and colleagues (2009) identified

men's ability to help children learn to regulate emotions (Cassidy, Parke, Butkovsky, &

Braungart, 1992) through active, physical play (Collins & Russell, 1991), encourage children in

the face of challenges (Bowlby, 1982; Grossman et al., 2002; Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000),

listen to their children, be honest in their feelings, be fair disciplinarians, and provide children

the freedom to be alone (Strom, Beckert, Strom, Strom, & Griswold, 2002) as noteworthy.

O'Neil (2008) specifically names "responsibility, courage, altruism, resiliency, service, protection of others, social justice, positive fathering, perseverance, generativity, and nonviolent problem solving" as strengths that exemplify "healthy masculinity" (p. 424). Kelly and Hall (1992) promote the idea that, despite the stereotypes of men being emotionally inexpressive, men are actually quite expressive—more often expressing themselves in alternate ways such as through volunteering for charity, keeping a journal, and collecting and listening to music. Wester and Lyubelsky (2005) observe that traditional male behaviors of law enforcement personnel significantly contribute to their personal survival and professional success. They also make the point, echoed by others, that the performance of most traditional masculine norms is not inherently problematic (Chen et al., 2009; Kiselica et al., 2008). Rather, it may be the inflexible, rigid conformity to these norms and concomitant reluctance to engage in non-traditional forms of masculine behavior (e.g., nurturing) that are the basis of problems (Wade, 2000). Indeed, many traditional masculine norms are adaptive in some contexts (e.g., risk-taking by entrepreneurial endeavor) and maladaptive in others (e.g., risk-taking by driving drunk). Perhaps, in the appropriate context, greater endorsement of some masculine norms may manifest as strengths (Good et al., 2006).

Culture is yet another form of context that is of central importance when discussing traditional masculine norms, positive psychology, and character strengths. Manhood is conceptualized by many social scientists as a social construction and achieved state that requires continual social maintenance (Vandellos, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). Men actively *do* gender in ways that differ across social and cultural contexts, thereby enacting multiple masculinities (Liu, 2005; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Thus, the common use of the singular term "masculinity" may reasonably be critiqued as an over-simplification of men's daily

negotiation of gendered expectations for their behavior. Going further, using the term

"traditional masculinity" risks obscuring the fact that different cultural groups have different

norms for what is traditionally masculine. For instance, emotional connectedness may be valued

as an expression of masculinity by Mexican American men (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank,

& Tracey, 2008), while emotional restraint may be more prized among Asian American men

(Sue, 2005). Thus, when the researchers cited above refer to traditional masculinity, the reader

should assume they are referring to the "prescribed dominant masculine style" of the majority

(i.e., White, heterosexual) culture that imposes its influence on men living within the United

States (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 336).

Along similar lines, while there are certain personal attributes that appear valued across

all cultures and societies (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) what qualifies as a strength or

weakness is significantly influenced by culture (Constantine & Sue, 2006). In one study,

pessimism was found to be related to negative psychological outcomes for Caucasian Americans

but to positive outcomes for Asian Americans (Chang, 1996). In another, subjective well-being

was found to be more highly related to interdependence in a Japanese sample, and independence

in the United States sample (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000). Furthermore, strengths

such as compassion, forgiveness, or happiness can manifest themselves in different ways or be

valued to a greater or lesser degree across cultural contexts (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2009;

Sandage, Hill, & Vang, 2003). With this in mind, the aforementioned strengths of traditional

masculinity should be considered most applicable to the Western cultural worldview—these

attributes may or may not similarly represent or function as strengths for men from diverse

backgrounds. In line with this prior research, the reader is advised that the current investigation

involved the study of beneficial aspects of endorsement of traditional North American masculine norms from a Western standpoint.

In sum, while there is much theoretical speculation on behalf of North American psychologists of men, empirical investigation of possible positive aspects of men's endorsement of traditional masculine roles is lacking. Specifically, while the aforementioned scholars suggest possible positive aspects of traditional masculinity, a comprehensive review of the literature detected no empirical studies designed to investigate the potential strengths associated with greater endorsement of aspects of traditional masculine norms. Hence, this study sought to address this dearth of empirical data by examining the evidence for hypotheses concerning the relations between conformity to traditional masculine norms and positive psychological strengths that coincide with descriptions of traditional men (i.e., courage, grit, personal control, autonomy, hope, endurance, and resilience).

Based on a review of the literature, the following seven hypotheses were offered. First, traditional men are often characterized as courageous (Kiselica et al., 2008); a trait that has been thought to involve overcoming fear (Woodard, 2004) and a willingness to take risks (Rate, Clarke, Lindsay, & Sternberg, 2007). Therefore, we hypothesized that more traditional men—specifically those endorsing greater emotional control and risk-taking—will report higher levels of courage. Second, perseverance and passion for long-term goals (i.e., "grit") is another potential strength attributed to traditional men (Levant, 1992; O'Neil, 2008). A competitive drive and dedication to one's vocational goals could both fuel the sustained effort and interest in projects that grit entails (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Accordingly, it was hypothesized that more traditional men—specifically those who endorse greater winning and primacy of work—will report higher levels of grit. Third, the personal control of one's emotions

and behaviors while trying to solve problems is thought to be a natural strength of the stoic

traditional male (Kiselica et al., 2008; Levant, 1992). Consequently, it was hypothesized that

more traditional men—specifically those endorsing greater emotional control—will report higher

levels of personal control. Fourth, traditional men are often portrayed as self-determining and

independent (Kiselica et al., 2008; Levant, 1992), the hallmarks of autonomy (Ryff, 1989).

Hence, it was hypothesized that more traditional men—specifically those endorsing greater self-

reliance—will report higher levels of autonomy. Fifth, demonstrations of traditional masculinity

include behaviors that require "feats of physical endurance and strength, that often put these men

at risk for injury and death" (Courtenay, 2000, p. 1390). Thus, it was hypothesized that more

traditional men—specifically those who endorse greater risk-taking—will report higher levels of

physical endurance and fitness. Sixth, traditional men are thought to be self-confident in their

personal ability to persevere in the face of hardship and stress (Levant, 1992; O'Neil, 2008),

keeping their emotions in check and "going it alone" if necessary (Wagnild & Young, 1993).

Thus, it was hypothesized that more traditional men—specifically those endorsing greater

emotional control and self-reliance—will report higher levels of resilience. Seventh, prior

research generally suggests a negative relation between conformity to traditional masculine

norms and well-being (see above), and a positive relation between the aforementioned positive

psychological strengths (see descriptions of measures below) and well-being. As a result, it was

expected that self-esteem and life satisfaction would be negatively associated with the traditional

masculine norms and positively associated with the six positive psychological strengths.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Participants were 250 men who ranged from 18 to 79 years of age (*M* = 35.68 years, *SD*

= 13.46), and consisted of: 188 (75%) White, 15 (6%) Asian, 13 (5%) Hispanic, 23 (9%) Black,

2 (1%) Indigenous men, and 9 (4%) individuals who opted not identify their ethnic background.

Participants' educational level consisted of: 1 (.4%) less than a high school diploma, 10 (4%)

high school diploma or GED, 53 (21%) some college experience, 12 (5%) 2-year college degree,

84 (34%) 4-year college degree, 51 (20%) master's degree, 22 (9%) doctoral degree, 11 (4%)

professional degree, and 6 (2%) did not disclose their education level. Current household

income was: 23 (13%) under $20,000, 41 (20%) $20,000 to $40,000, 51 (14%) $40,000 to

$75,000, 67 (27%) over $75,000, 48 (19%) opted not disclose their income. Sexual orientation

was reported as: 181 (72%) heterosexual men, 21 (8%) homosexual men, 15 (6%) bisexual men,

and 24 (10%) did not disclose their sexual orientation. To obtain a diverse sample of men,

participants were solicited via postings to 23 listservs focusing on male-salient issues (e.g.,

fatherhood, fathers' rights, and psychology of men). Participants were directed to a survey

posted on a research website (*name omitted for masked review*). Of note, a recent analysis

concluded that results from internet data are consistent with those from paper and pencil

measures (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004). Upon completion of the survey,

participants were allowed to view previously completed compiled anonymous responses as a

small participation incentive.

Instruments

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003). The CMNI

assesses conformity to 11 traditional masculine norms that are widespread in the United States:

Winning, Emotional Control, Risk-Taking, Violence, Power Over Women, Dominance, Playboy,

Self-Reliance, Primacy of Work, Disdain for Homosexuality, and Pursuit of Status. Based on

extensive consultation with several post-doctoral gender scholars and doctoral-level focus group

feedback, the norms of Playboy, Disdain for Homosexuals, and Power Over Women were

deemed to be less amenable to positive re-interpretation as strengths than were the other eight

subscales. These three subscales did not appear to have positive features; hence, these three

subscales were omitted from the study. The eight remaining scales were more amenable to

positive reframing. For example, the desires to win, dominate, take risks, put work first, and

pursue status can all fuel perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Likewise, when one

group is being violently oppressed by another, controlling one's emotions and being willing to

utilize violent action to protect the innocent are arguably adaptive, courageous behaviors.

Accordingly, this resulted in an 8-factor, 63-item measure answered on a 4-point scale (0 =

strongly disagree, 3 = strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater conformity to

masculine norms. The CMNI has shown strong convergent validity with other measures of

masculinity, such as the Brannon Masculinity Scale-Short Form (Brannon & Juni, 1984), Gender

Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil et al., 1986), and the Masculinity Gender Role Stress Scale (Eisler &

Skidmore, 1988). Support for the concurrent validity of the CMNI was provided by associations

between the CMNI subscales in relation to aggression, social discomfort, hostility and

psychological distress. Mahalik et al. (2003) reported acceptable to very good internal

consistency estimates for the 11 masculine norms subscales (αs = .75 - .91). Temporal stability

assessed via test-retest was .95 for the CMNI total score over a 2–3 week duration, and ranged

from .76 to .90 for the 11 subscales over the same period. In the current study, coefficient alpha

was .90 for the CMNI total comprised of 8 subscales, and ranged from .66 (Dominance) to .93

(Emotional Control) among the 8 subscales.

Measures of Positive Psychological Constructs. Measures of positive psychological constructs were selected based upon: (a) expert opinion from 10 post-doctoral and five doctoral-level psychology student researchers and practitioners with content expertise in positive psychology and/or the psychology of men, (b) adequate psychometric properties, and (c) a plausible theoretical parallel between the strength measure and (a positive reinterpretation of) the traditional masculine norms included in Mahalik and colleagues' (2003) Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (e.g., *autonomy* and the independence aspect of *self-reliance*). Higher scores on the following measures indicate a greater presence or potency of that construct.

The Woodard Pury Courage Scale (WPCS-23; Woodard & Pury, 2007) is a 23-item measure designed to assess courage. Courage is operationalized as the voluntary willingness to act in response to a threat to achieve an important, perhaps moral, outcome or goal. Responses are scored on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), with a sample item being "I would endure physical pain for my religious or moral beliefs." Providing support for its validity, a previous version of the WPCS-23 (the Personal Perspectives Survey-31) was significantly correlated with Schmidt and Koselka's (2000) Courage Scale and was unrelated to social desirability (Woodard, 2004). Coefficient alpha was .78 in the present sample.

The Grit Scale (Grit; Duckworth et al., 2007) is a 12-item measure designed to assess perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Responses are scored on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all like me, 5 = very much like me), with a sample item being "I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge." Support for its validity is provided by findings that Grit did not correlate with IQ, was highly correlated with Big Five Conscientiousness and self-control. Grit accounted for 4% of the variance in predicting success beyond that accounted for by conscientiousness and self-control, thereby demonstrating incremental predictive validity in the

prediction of success (Duckworth et al.). Coefficient alphas ranged from .77 to .85 across

samples including community adults, Ivy League undergraduates, and West Point cadets.

Coefficient alpha was .82 in the current sample.

The Personal Control subscale of the Problem Solving Inventory (PC; Heppner &

Petersen, 1982) is a 5-item measure designed to assess the personal belief that one is in control of

one's emotions and behaviors while solving problems. Items are rated on a 6-point scale (1 =

strongly agree, 6 = strongly disagree), with a sample item being "Even though I work on a

problem, sometimes I feel like I am groping or wandering and am not getting down to the real

issue." In the present study, scores were adjusted such that higher scores on PC indicate a greater

perception of personal control to maintain interpretive consistency across measures. In an

extensive review, Heppner, Witty, and Dixon (2004) found PC to correlate with respondents'

ratings of their level of problem-solving skills and their perceived level of satisfaction with

skills, while only slightly correlating .16 with social desirability (Heppner & Petersen, 1982).

Coefficient alpha average is in the low .70s (Heppner & Petersen, 1982), and it is internally

consistent across different cultural groups (Heppner & Wang, 2003). In the current sample, the

coefficient alpha was .82.

The Autonomy subscale of the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Autonomy; Ryff, 1989)

is a 14-item measure designed to assess being independent and able to resist social pressures.

Responses are rated on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree), with a sample

item being "I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is

important." Support for its validity is provided by findings that a longer version of this measure

correlated positively with scales assessing self-esteem and life satisfaction and negatively with

scales assessing depression and external control (Ryff, Lee, Essex, & Schmutte, 1994). Ryff

(1989) reported a coefficient alpha of .86, while a coefficient of .88 was observed in the present sample.

The Endurance subscale of the Physical Self-Description Questionnaire (Endurance; Marsh, Richards, Johnson, Roche, & Tremayne, 1994) is a 6-item measure designed to assess physical endurance/fitness. Responses are rated on a 6-point scale (1 = false, 6 = true), with a sample item being "I can run a long way without stopping." The subscale has shown good convergent, discriminant, and construct validity, as well as good internal consistency (αs ranging from .87 to .92) and temporal stability (test-retest reliability estimate of .87; Marsh, 1996: Marsh et al., 2004). Coefficient alpha was .97 for the current study.

The Resilience Scale (RS-10; Neill & Dias, 2001) is a 10-item measure derived via factor analysis from Wagnild and Young's (1993) 25-item Resilience Scale. These scales are designed to measure of the ability to successfully cope with change or misfortune. Responses are rated on a 7-point scale (1 = disagree, 7 = agree), with a sample item being "I usually take things in stride." The content validity of the items was supported via interviews with American women judged to have successfully adapted to major life events. Concurrent validity was supported by significant correlations between Resilience scores and measures of morale, life satisfaction, and depression (Wagnild & Young, 1993). Neill and Dias (2001) reported an alpha coefficient of .91 for a 15-item version, while coefficient alpha was .86 for the 10-item version used in the current study. Researchers interested in using brief measures of resilience are encouraged to contact Wagnild and Young for additional information.

Measures of Psychological Adjustment. Psychological adjustment was assessed via measures of self-esteem and satisfaction with life. With both measures, higher scores indicate greater presence of the attribute.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1979) is a 10-item measure that assesses individuals' overall evaluation of his or her worthiness as a human being. Items are rated on a 4-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree), with a sample item being "I take a positive attitude toward myself." The RSES displays high internal consistency ($\alpha = 88$–.92), high test-retest validity ($r = .85$), and strong support for validity when associated with other scales of similar constructs and with raters' assessments ($r = .56 - 67$; Corcoran & Fischer, 1987). Coefficient alpha was .88 for the current study.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is a 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life. Items are rated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), with a sample item being "I am satisfied with my life." In support of its validity, Diener and colleagues (1985) found with the SWLS correlated positively with measures of self-esteem and happiness and negatively with measures of neuroticism and psychological symptoms. Internal consistency ($\alpha = .80 - .89$) and test–retest reliability values ($r = .54 - .83$) have been in the acceptable range (Pavot, Diener, Colvin, & Sandvik, 1991), with coefficient alpha being .89 in the current study.

Random Response Detector (RRD). To reduce threats to the validity of individuals' responses due to random or inattentive responding (Kurtz & Parish, 2001), three pairs of inverse items were inserted throughout the questionnaire (e.g., "I am not a hard worker" and "I am a hard worker") and checked for consistency of responding. Data from the few participants who inconsistently responded to two or more RRD item pairs was removed from the sample.

Results

Means, standard deviations, ranges, and internal consistency estimates for all scales are presented in Table 1. To explore the relations between conformity to each of the traditional

masculine norms and each positive psychological strength thought to be characteristic of men, Pearson correlations were computed (see Table 2). Overall, correlations were modest, ranging from -.28 to .32 in direction and magnitude. Likewise, to explore relations between the masculine norms and positive psychological constructs to indicators of favorable psychological adjustment (i.e., self-esteem and life satisfaction), correlations among these constructs were examined. As expected, both self-esteem and life satisfaction were significantly negatively correlated with risk-taking and self-reliance, though pursuit of status positively correlated with self-esteem. Furthermore, all of the positive psychological constructs were significantly positively associated with life satisfaction and self-esteem, with the exception of a nonsignificant relation between grit and self-esteem.

Additionally, the item "I love participating in sports" was one of six items included in the study to identify random or careless responses (i.e., as part of the Random Response Detector). However, post-hoc analyses indicated that the enjoying participating in sports item explained 19% of variation in men's Physical Endurance ($r = .44$, $p < .001$) and was significantly correlated with CMNI Total ($r = .17$, $p < .01$).

Primary Analyses

To investigate whether more traditional men report higher levels of the six positive psychological strengths, it was necessary to first examine the CMNI total score's relation with each of the positive psychological strengths (see Table 2). Pearson correlations indicated that overall conformity to traditional masculine norms was significantly positively correlated with endurance, but negatively correlated with grit, personal control, and autonomy. These findings provided support for only hypothesis five. Hypotheses one, two, three, four, and six were not supported.

To examine whether higher levels of theoretically relevant masculine norms predicted a higher level of the positive psychological strength specified in each hypothesis, simultaneous multiple regression analyses were used next. This allowed assessment of the unique contribution of each masculine norm in question, while accounting for the non-theoretically relevant norms. Table 3 presents the standardized regression coefficients (β) with their corresponding t values, the F for the regression model, and the R^2 (the proportion of the variance in each strength accounted for by the masculine norms) for each regression model. Results indicated that emotional control predicted lower courage while risk-taking predicted greater courage, winning, and primacy of work both failed to predict grit, emotional control failed to predict personal control, self-reliance predicted lower autonomy, risk-taking predicted greater endurance, and emotional control and self-reliance predicted lower resilience. These findings provide partial support for hypothesis one and full support for hypothesis five. Hypotheses two, three, four, and six were not supported.

Discussion

While the "dark side" of traditional masculinity has been well documented in theory and research (O'Neil, 2008), the growing positive psychology field warrants empirical investigation for its potential application to the psychology of men and masculinity. To advance this objective, this study was the first to empirically examine psychological strengths associated with greater endorsement of dominant Western norms of traditional masculinity. Overall, conformity to traditional masculinity and to specific masculine norms was associated with both the greater and lesser presence of various positive psychological strengths.

In alignment with the predictions of proponents of traditional masculinity (e.g., Kiselica et al., 2008; Levant, 1992), more traditional men, including those who engage in more frequent

risk-taking, were more likely to report higher levels of physical endurance and fitness. While

this relationship may be due in part to the association between traditional masculinity and

participation in sports, it is perhaps more likely that traditional men view being physically strong

and resilient as a prerequisite of being masculine and thus may tend to overestimate their

physical fitness on a self-report measure. Indeed, prior research has found an association

between self-reported masculinity and perceived endurance, strength, and fitness (Delignieres,

Marcellini, Brisswalter, & Legros, 1994).

      These risk-taking men were also more likely to report higher levels of personal courage.

One possible explanation for this finding is that courage inherently involves the willingness to

take a risk by acting in response to a threat, despite the potential for a personal negative outcome

(Woodard & Pury, 2007). Along similar lines, men endorsing the norm of dominance may have

also reported higher levels of courage as it often may take a willingness to act boldly and

confidently in the face of opposition to insure that others will behave in accordance with one's

wishes. Pursuit of status was also related to greater levels of courage. This relation may be due

to the observation that achieving status among one's peers as a man often involves becoming

known for what one achieves vocationally (Skovholt, 1990). Notable vocational achievement

often require the willingness to risk the loss of one's resources, reputation, and perhaps even

work-life balance in pursuit of status-accompanying accomplishments. Alternatively, those who

desire to be important in others' eyes may be more likely to take courageous action, particularly

if it brings them public recognition. In contrast to our first hypothesis, those traditional men who

valued emotional control actually reported lower levels of personal courage. Those who bury

their emotions may experience difficulties with anxiety (Barr, Kahn, & Schneider, 2008)—a

state of mind that is not conducive to courageous action. Reciprocally, for some men, courage

may also be reflected in their willingness to share their emotional world with others, though this is likely to vary by cultural context.

Along similar lines, men who highly value emotional control were *not* more likely to have greater personal control over their emotions and behaviors while solving problems. In fact, those traditional men who valued winning and self-reliance reported lower levels of personal control. It might seem counterintuitive that men who seek to keep their emotions private (a form of self-reliance) and under control experience a lesser ability to exercise personal control over their emotions and behaviors while solving problems. Qualitative research suggests that many men perceive emotional restriction as contributing to their ability to think and make decisions free from the influence of disruptive emotion, but the current results from our predominantly Caucasian sample do not support this popular conception. In fact, some research suggests those who enjoy less personal control are more likely to use disengagement coping (Heppner, Cook, Wright, & Johnson, 1995) and refrain from seeking others' help (Heppner, Witty, & Dixon, 2004). This differential utility of problem solving versus emotional control is supported by our findings regarding the relationship between emotional control, personal control, and indices of psychological adjustment. While emotional control was found to negatively relate to self-esteem and life satisfaction (a finding in line with prior research by Oransky and Fischer, 2009), personal control was positively related to these indices of adjustment, a finding also in line with prior research (Heppner et al., 2004). The likelihood of replicating this finding with a sample of men from a collectivist culture, where emotional control is highly valued, is uncertain. In addition, men who feel driven to win at all costs may be more likely to experience anxiety, a trait that is robustly negatively related to personal control (Carscaddon et al., 1988).

Further contradiction of our hypotheses is evident in the finding that men endorsing greater emotional control and self-reliance actually reported lower levels of resilience. Perhaps keeping one's emotions private and not asking for help is associated with less likelihood of experiencing collaborative social interaction, through which one can learn and develop adaptive coping skills (Beardslee, 1989), the fundamental building blocks of psychological resilience. While the ability to depend on oneself is a Western hallmark of resilient people, so is a healthy social support network (Wagnild & Young, 1993). Resilient men may also be more likely to seek out and enjoy emotional support from trusted others. On the positive side, men scoring higher on risk-taking reported higher levels of resilience. This makes sense, as resilient individuals demonstrate the willingness to take risks by consistently confronting new experiences with self-confidence (Wagnild & Young, 1993).

More traditional men, including those who conformed to the masculine norms of winning and self-reliance, reported lower levels of autonomy (i.e., being independent and able to resist social pressures). It is curious that the men in the sample who placed importance on not asking for help (i.e., self-reliance—which may include keeping their emotions private) were actually *less* independent and able to resist social pressures. While some men might seek to demonstrate excessive independence by maladaptively refusing to seek help from others (sometimes called "counter dependence"), such behavior may actually represent a form of conformity to the expectations that others have of men. In fact, *conformity* to the masculine norm of self-reliance is just that—conformity to the expectations of others, rather than a demonstration of one's ability and inclination to chart a path independent of others' expectations. Indicators of psychological adjustment suggest that refusing to seek help from others is related to lower quality of life. Conversely, the ability to knowingly resist normative societal pressures may be the type of

independence associated with greater well-being among Western men. In addition, men who highly value winning may be acquiescing to the pressure from North American culture to succeed at all costs, effectively letting others define their standards of success. From a Western perspective, conforming to other's expectations, albeit perhaps subconsciously, is the antithesis of independent self-awareness and self-directed living. That being said, men endorsing higher levels of dominance did report having higher levels of autonomy. Since dominance involves getting one's way and the desire to have others act in accordance with one's own desires, it necessarily follows that one (a) values and trusts his own opinions and (b) is unlikely to be concerned with the expectations of others—both markers of autonomy.

Lastly, the hypothesis that men subscribing to the norms of winning and primacy of work would report higher levels of grit (i.e., perseverance and passion for long-term goals) was not supported by the data. While these traditional attributes are certainly not incompatible with a healthy level of grit, these findings support the notion that one can passionately persevere in non-vocational goals that do not involve competition with others, such as spiritual development. It was also found that traditional men for whom the pursuit of status was a higher priority reported lower levels of grit. While some people sustain effort because they wish to garner favor with others rather than out of subjective interest, gritty individuals demonstrate a consistency of interests over time (Duckworth et al., 2007). It is also possible that the desire to achieve social status may drive some traditional men towards jobs that offer such exposure, even if these jobs are not well-suited to their vocational interests and skills, which can lead to greater unhappiness on the job, and thus more frequent career changes (Clark, Georgeellis, & Sanfey, 1998; Holland, 1997). Of course, in those cultures where an interdependent construal of the self is the norm, seeking to meet others expectations may be valued more than asserting one's own preferences or

goals (Pedrotti et al., 2009). In sum, the findings suggest that conformity to masculine norms in general and adherence to specific aspects of masculine norms in particular are both positively and negatively associated with various psychological strengths.

Implications for Practice

Since societal conceptions of masculinity are important sources of behavioral guidance and identity for boys and men, practitioners may find increased success in getting and retaining men in counseling by advertising and tailoring their practice in a way that is sensitive to their gendered worldview (Good, Gilbert, & Scher, 1990; Hammer & Vogel, in press; Kiselica, 2003; Shappiro, 2001). A focus on distinguishing healthy forms of masculinity from unhealthy ones and on identifying and building upon the strengths they have as men may resonate more with traditional men than an emotion-focused, symptom-alleviation approach (Mankowski, Maton, Burke, Hoover, & Anderson, 2000); it may help men restore the possible lost sense of pride associated with being a man (Levant, 1997). Aiding men in developing healthy, flexible conceptions of masculinity may have more intrinsic appeal than would being told what *not* to do, though that is certainly an important component (Good, 1998). Providing boys and men with male role models who exemplify positive masculinity (e.g., a willingness to seek help) may be a worthwhile intervention. Strengths may offer new male clients with a more familiar starting point for exploring their difficulties and opportunities, one which helps build rapport early on.

The current study provides practitioners with several potential talking points for their strength-based discussions with men. Therapists can share with clients that empirical support regarding the strengths of some aspects of traditional masculinity exists; this may increase the evidence-based legitimacy and substance of practitioners' strength-based approach for some male clients. Such an approach might be useful for those who tend to be more skeptical about

mental health services (e.g., men in rural regions, men in the military, law enforcement, and fire fighters).

Additionally, the findings of this study may serve as potential items for discussion when working with men. For instance, practitioners can discuss with clients how they might channel their propensity for risk-taking in service of courageous action, resilient endurance in the face of setbacks, and aggressive pursuit of important goals (Kiselica et al., 2008). Pointing out that the pursuit of status can be associated with both positive strengths (e.g., courage) and negative outcomes (e.g., a lessened focus toward long-term goals) serves as an example of the importance of the flexible enactment of one's masculinities. Keeping emotions bottled up inside has been found to be associated with a compromised ability to set aside disruptive emotions when it comes time to solve problems; this concept offers an evidence-based counterpoint to the popular Western conception that emotional stoicism is preferred when one aspires to be a logical and rational agent. Likewise, helping clients understand the difference between self-reliance and true autonomy, and adjustment outcomes associated with each behavioral style, may help clients rethink their interpersonal style. Perhaps most importantly, clinicians can note that research has found that many traditional men demonstrate adaptive strengths—strengths which their clients can use "as a building block for promoting wellness and honorable manhood" (Kiselica et al., 2008, p. 32).

Limitation and Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations of this study. First, correlation is not causation. Hence, these findings do not support the notion that conforming to certain masculine norms causes greater or lesser amounts of positive psychological traits. However, the correlational relations observed between these constructs offers directions for future researchers, including exploring

potential causal relations. In addition to longitudinal research on the development of character

strengths and the conformity to masculine norms, we strongly recommend that future research

incorporate qualitative methods to help inform future theorizing about potential causality.

Second, this study relied upon men's responses to self-report questionnaires, the limitations of

which are well known, including the potential for socially desirable responding (Lucas & Baird,

2006). However, the use of anonymous online participation protocol has been found to

effectively reduce social desirable responding (Booth-Kewley, Larson, & Miyoshi, 2007;

McBurney, 1994). Third, while online studies have the benefit of reaching larger audiences and

yield results that are similar or better in terms of measures' psychometric properties (Birnbaum,

2004; Gosling et al., 2004), some biases may be introduced as not all men have access to a

computer, belong to the listservs, or visit the websites where the study was advertised. Fourth,

conclusions from our study are limited by the choice of instruments used to operationalize the

constructs; selection of other instruments might yield different findings. Fifth, the majority of

the sample was white, educated, middle class, and heterosexual, which limits the generalizability

of these findings to men from diverse backgrounds. As an example, while the current findings

suggest a negative relation between emotional control and resilience, this may not hold true for

Asian American men, where restraint of all strong emotions indicates maturity and the ability to

value the needs of the group over one's individual affective desires (Sue, 2005). Furthermore,

the strengths examined in this investigation reflected a Western perspective on positive

psychology and traditional masculine norms. Therefore, future research studies should not only

examine these relations within specific groups of men (e.g., men of color, gay and bisexual men,

working class men), but take care to include the attributes that each sub-group of men considers

strengths. For instance, studies focusing on men from collectivistic backgrounds should

carefully appraise whether it is culturally valid to conceptualize autonomy as a strength or self-reliance as a marker of traditional masculinity.

Despite these limitations, this study breaks new ground regarding the existence of strengths associated with traditional ways of enacting masculinity in the Western context. Findings suggest that there is some utility in continuing to explore the healthy aspects of traditional masculinity (Levant, 1997; O'Neil, 2008). This knowledge may be employed to increase the appeal and utility of counseling for more therapy-resistant men, as well as to suggest ideas for health-promoting exploration and consideration with men. In this way, the psychology of men and masculinity can respond to the call of positive psychology to acknowledge and consider the utility of a strengths-based approach, gender-sensitive approach with men.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges, and Coefficient Alphas of Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory and Subscales, Positive Psychological Constructs, and Psychological Adjustment

Instruments	*M*	*SD*	Range	α
Conformity to Masculine Norms Scale				
CMNI Total Score	1.35	0.28	.51-2.56	.90
Winning	1.31	0.46	0-2.90	.84
Emotional Control	1.27	0.56	0-2.73	.93
Risk-Taking	1.50	0.42	.40-3.00	.86
Violence	1.37	0.58	0-3.00	.86
Dominance	1.35	0.48	0-3.00	.66
Self-Reliance	1.11	0.57	0-2.83	.89
Primacy of Work	1.21	0.46	.13-2.75	.79
Pursuit of Status	1.85	0.47	.50-3.00	.75
Positive Psychological Constructs and Psychological Adjustment				
Courage	3.78	0.43	2.65-4.61	.78
Grit	3.09	0.68	1.23-4.54	.82
Personal Control	2.99	0.90	.83-5.00	.82
Autonomy	4.33	0.82	1.36-6.00	.88
Endurance	3.29	1.59	1.00-6.00	.97
Resilience	5.72	0.92	1.60-7.00	.86
Self-Esteem	3.11	0.53	1.40-4.00	.88
Life Satisfaction	4.53	1.49	1.00-7.00	.89

Table 2

Correlations of CMNI Total and Subscales with Positive Psychological and Psychological Adjustment Constructs

Instruments	Cour	Grit	PC	Aut	End	Resil	Life Sat[†]	Self Est[†]
CMNI	.10	-.14[a]	-.18[b]	-.13 [a]	.17[b]	.01	-.10	-.09
Win	.02	-.12	-.14 [a]	-.17[b]	.17[b]	.11	-.04	.01
EC	-.16[a]	-.09	-.21[b]	-.15[a]	.03	-.26[c]	-.19[b]	-.27[c]
RT	.32[c]	.04	-.03	.08	.22[c]	.19[b]	.09	.11
Viol	.14[a]	-.06	-.05	.06	.06	.01	-.07	-.04
Dom	.15[a]	-.05	-.01	.01	.09	.11	-.06	.07
SR	-.15[a]	-.14[a]	-.28[c]	-.25[c]	.08	-.26[c]	-.17[b]	-.30[c]
PW	.08	-.04	-.03	-.02	.01	.12	.04	.02
PS	.17[b]	-.18[b]	.05	-.09	.11	.18[b]	.01	.15[a]
Life Sat[†]	.27[c]	.17[b]	.28[c]	.22[c]	.30[c]	.62[c]	--	.63[c]
Self Est[†]	.31[c]	.09	.55[c]	.42[c]	.23[c]	.68[c]	.63[c]	--

Notes. CMNI = Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory total of 8 factors; Win = Winning subscale; EC = Emotional Control subscale; RT = Risk-Taking subscale; Viol = Violence subscale; Dom = Dominance subscale; SR = Self-Reliance subscle; Work = Primacy of Work subscale; PS = Pursuit of Status subscale; Cour = Woodard Pury Courage Scale; Grit = Grit Scale; PC = Personal Control subscale of Problem-Solving Inventory; Aut = Autonomy subscale of Ryff's Psychological Well Being Scale; End = Endurance subscale of Physical Self-Description Questionnaire; Resil = Resilience Scale; Life Sat = Satisfaction with Life Scale; Self Est = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

[†] LS and SE listed in both columns and rows to facilitate comparisons with CMNI and positive psychological constructs.

[a] $p < .05$, [b] $p < .01$, [c] $p < .001$

Table 3

Simultaneous Regression Analysis with CMNI Subscales Predicting Positive Psychological Constructs

| | Predictor Variables | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Win | | EC | | RT | | Viol | | Dom | | SR | | PW | | PS | | | Adj. |
Crit Var	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	F	$R2$
Cou	-.22	-2.71[b]	-.15	-2.01[a]	.29	4.45	.10	1.57	.17	2.37[a]	.10	1.57	.17	2.37[a]	.17	2.37[a]	7.03[c]	.16
Grit	-.06	-.64	-.03	-.41	.09	1.30	-.05	-.67	.06	.81	-.12	-1.65	.04	.56	-.19	-2.58[a]	2.01[a]	.03
PC	-.18	-2.18[a]	-.11	-1.47	-.03	-.45	.04	.61	.11	1.50	-.22	-3.11[b]	.02	.33	.09	1.26	3.77[c]	.08
Aut	-.25	-3.02[b]	-.09	-1.24	.09	1.30	.12	1.76	.17	2.26[a]	-.20	-2.92[b]	.06	.93	-.08	-1.05	4.51[c]	.10
End	.12	1.40	-.01	-.16	.20	2.97[b]	-.05	-.65	-.01	-.10	.07	1.02	-.08	-1.11	.05	.62	2.33[a]	.04
Res	.04	.52	-.19	-2.59[a]	.14	2.10[a]	.00	.01	.09	1.21	-.21	-3.16[b]	.07	1.11	.08	1.08	6.01[c]	.14

Note. DFs for F = (8, 250). β is the standardized regression (beta) weight. Crit Var = Criterion variables; CMNI = Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory Total of 8 factors; Win = Winning subscale; EC = Emotional Control subscale; RT = Risk-Taking subscale; Viol = Violence subscale; Dom = Dominance subscale; SR = Self-Reliance subscale; Work = Primacy of Work subscale; PS = Pursuit of Status subscale; Cou = Woodard Pury Courage Scale; Grit = Grit Scale; PC = Personal Control subscale of Problem-Solving Inventory; Aut = Autonomy subscale of Ryff's Psychological Well Being Scale; End = Endurance subscale of Physical Self-Description Questionnaire; Res = Resilience Scale.

[a] $p < .05$, [b] $p < .01$, [c] $p < 001$