PERCEPTIONS OF FATHERS' AFFECTION AND CONFIRMATION AS MEDIATORS OF

MASCULINITY AND RELATIONAL QUALITY IN FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

by

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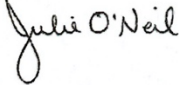

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Quality in Father-Child Relationships

Over the last few decades, scholars from various disciplines have devoted attention to the

influence of gender orientation on relational quality. In terms of a masculine gender orientation,

specifically, scholars have identified inverse associations between masculinity and intimacy,

satisfaction, and closeness primarily within the context of romantic relationships (Burn & Ward,

2005; Cox & O'Loughlin, 2017; Marshall, 2008; Wade & Coughlin, 2012). Historically,

researchers have looked at masculinity from a single vantage point, namely, that of *traditional*

masculinity, in which men are expected to be tough, unemotional, dominant, and powerful

(Mahalik et al., 2003). However, traditional masculinity is not the only form of masculinity that

men enact. For instance, nontraditional (or "new") masculinity is one form of masculinity that

has gained theoretical and empirical prominence (Ratele, 2015) and is characterized by qualities

such as emotional openness, gender egalitarianism, prioritization of family life, avoidance of

physical aggression, and cooperation (Kaplan et al., 2017; Padgett, 2017).

Although there is ample research to suggest that men in Western culture may enact a

plurality of masculinities (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Johansson, 2011; Odenweller et al.,

2013; Roberts, 2013), not all masculinities are accepted equally nor do all men enact multiple

masculinities. In fact, there may be growing ambiguity within Western culture as to how to enact

masculinity, and more specifically, fatherhood. In earlier research, for example, Morman and

Floyd (2002) asserted that there is a changing culture of fatherhood, and more recently,

Odenweller and colleagues (2018) observed a lack of consensus regarding how to enact

fatherhood. Given recent cultural changes in the enactment of both masculinity and fatherhood,

as well as identifiable associations between masculinity and father-child relational quality (Klann

et al., 2018; Starcher, 2015), research that compares and contrasts different forms of masculinity within the context of fatherhood may have important implications for father-child relational quality, thus warranting further investigation.

Researchers have reported inverse associations between traditional masculinity and relational quality, yet much less is known about how alternative forms of masculinity, such as new masculinity (Kaplan et al., 2017), are associated with father-child relational quality. Not only are both forms of masculinity likely to be associated with relational quality in father-child relationships, but they are likely to be associated with such outcomes in opposite directions. For instance, in father-child relationships, certain masculine traits, such as fathers' competitiveness and dominance (cf. Starcher, 2015), may be inversely associated with their children's feelings of relational quality (i.e., closeness and satisfaction), whereas counter-masculine traits, such as caring involvement (Petts et al., 2018), encouragement, and gentleness (Karre, 2016) should be positively associated with relational quality. Despite this line of reasoning, however, research comparing the different associations that may exist between various forms of masculinity and relational quality in father-child relationships is limited. Thus, one way scholars can advance an understanding of how masculinity is enacted and with what (un)intended consequences for fathers and their children is to compare the unique associations of traditional and nontraditional masculinities with young adults' reports of relational closeness and satisfaction with their father.

A second goal of this research is to investigate the role that communication behaviors play in the relationship between masculinity and father-child relational quality. Although a variety of communication behaviors may explain how fathers perform, and children interpret, masculinity, this study focuses on two in particular that hold tremendous importance for the health and well-being of family members: affection and confirmation. First, *affectionate*

communication conveys love and warmth through verbal, nonverbal, and supportive behaviors (Floyd & Mormon, 1998). Floyd (2002) identified a host of positive health and relational outcomes for people who receive affection from others, including higher relational satisfaction, more comfort with relational closeness, less fear of intimacy, more happiness, and enhanced mental health. In father-son relationships, for example, Mormon and Floyd (1999) found that sons' relational closeness and communication satisfaction increased as father's affection increased.

Concurrent with expressions of affection are greater or lesser degrees of *confirmation*, communication that acknowledges and endorses another person as a respected human being through behaviors that are supportive and challenging (Dailey, 2008b; Ellis, 2002). Dailey (2010) found that reports of father's confirmation were associated with greater autonomy, self-esteem, and identity strength for young adult children. Ellis (2002) also found that children whose parents engaged in confirming behaviors felt more supported and accepted in those relationships. If traditional masculinity encourages the suppression of emotion, dominance over others, homophobia, risk taking, and in some cases, violence (Mahalik et al., 2003), then fathers who enact this form of masculinity may be less likely to express confirming messages and affection to their children. Conversely, nontraditional or new masculinities may encourage both behaviors. Given the positive associations that affectionate and confirming behaviors are likely to have with young adults' feelings of closeness and satisfaction with their fathers, this study will test fathers' affection and confirmation as explanatory mechanisms for the associations between fathers' masculinity and relational quality in the father-child relationship.

Theoretical perspective

Masculinity and Relational Quality

An ideology of masculinity typically focuses on the ideal masculine performance (Levant et al., 2019). Said another way, it is (historically) a grouping of characteristics and behaviors that men are expected to embody. The grouping of characteristics reflects a cultural belief system about masculinity, grounded in a relationship between the two sexes (Pleck et al., 1993). Although there may be a variety of ways in which masculinity is enacted, the most frequently studied ideology is referred to as "traditional" masculinity (Wade & Coughlin, 2012). Conceptual depictions of traditional masculinity have concentrated on norms and expectations that have diverse, negative consequences (Pleck, 1995; Wade & Coughlin, 2012). The depictions typically include norms and expectations of competitiveness, dominance, restricted emotionality, toughness, independence, homophobia, power over women, violence, and risk-taking (Mahalik et al., 2003). Men who are traditionally masculine often represent an archetype: the cold, distant, work-centered, dominating, self-reliant man who values winning, power, and status. This type of man will rarely be seen showing emotions (unless it is anger), collaborating, sharing, submitting, serving, or opening up to others. This form of masculinity has long been viewed by researchers as culturally normative masculine behavior (Mahalik et al., 2003).

Some scholars have asserted that aspects of traditional masculinity prevail, in part, because of cultures of heteropatriarchy, in which heterosexual males hold the power. Hence, shifts in masculinity require changes to the heteropatriarchal ordering (Radzi et al., 2018; Ratele, 2015). In earlier research, however, Levant (1992) argued that there may be some beneficial components to traditional masculinity, such as a masculine individual's willingness to endure pain to protect others, to care for others through problem-solving, dedication and commitment,

and an ability to solve problems and stay calm in the face of danger. More recently, Morman et al. (2013) found that men's masculinity was positively associated with their self-disclosure and commitment in a same-sex friendship. Thus, although the partners and family members of traditionally masculine men are often less satisfied relationally, there may be some benefits to traditional masculinity that, nevertheless, enhance masculine men's relationships, more generally, and father-child relationships, specifically.

Gender socialization is influential in the transmission of gender ideals, as parents and others teach children gendered norms and expectations. Fathers play an integral role in socializing their sons about masculine norms and expectations, and one way they do this is through modeling gender norms (Amin et al., 2018). Odenweller and colleagues (2018) found that fathers socialize their sons communicatively by expressing messages that align with both traditional and more contemporary notions of masculinity. Whereas some scholars have emphasized that fathers use gendered messages to socialize their sons (Klann et al., 2018) and mothers use gendered messages to socialize their daughters (Rittenour et al., 2014), other scholars have observed both parents using messages to socialize cross-sex children as well (Lawson et al., 2015).

The gender modeling and socialization process has personal and relational implications for both parents and their children. For instance, the traditional masculine ideology is inversely associated with general well-being (Rochlen et al., 2008) and positively associated with drug use, drinking, delinquency (Gilbert et al., 2018), and teaching sexist attitudes (Klann et al., 2018). In addition, men who endorse traditional forms of masculinity and their family members have often reported less satisfied and close relationships with each other (e.g., Mormon & Floyd, 2002). Likewise, in romantic relationships, men who report conforming to traditional masculine

ideologies are less satisfied in their relationships (Burn & Ward, 2005; Cox & O'Loughlin, 2017; Marshall, 2008; Wade & Coughlin, 2012) and have partners who are less satisfied (Burn & Ward, 2005; Marshall, 2008). In one study, Marshall (2008) found that a traditional masculine ideology negatively predicted self-disclosure, which then positively predicted actor and partner relational intimacy. In other words, traditional masculinity had a negative indirect effect on relational intimacy for both relational partners via reduced self-disclosure. Despite contrary evidence from men's same-sex friendships (e.g., Morman et al., 2013), traditionally masculine men are often less inclined to engage in self-disclosure (Marshall, 2008), give affection (Mahalik et al., 2005), and share emotions with romantic partners (Burn & Ward, 2005), and therefore, often have less satisfying romantic relationships as a result.

Relative to a more general focus on the romantic relationships of men, the parent-child relationship has received less empirical attention regarding masculinity and relational outcomes. The limited research that does exist, however, tells a similar story. Children who perceived that their father endorsed a traditional masculine ideology reported less relational closeness with their father (Klann et al., 2018). Likewise, children with fathers who emphasized winning and physical skill development, qualities that are akin to the traditionally masculine trait of winning/competitiveness, were significantly less satisfied in their relationships with their father than children whose fathers communicated having fun and effort as priorities (Starcher, 2015). In general, fathers who hold more traditionally masculine norms are less involved with instrumental and expressive parenting (Petts et al., 2018). In addition, men who conform to traditionally masculine norms may have difficulty and discomfort attending to the emotional lives of their children and may feel uncomfortable expressing affection and support (Levant, 1992; Mahalik et al., 2005).

Overall, then, a growing body of research testifies to an inverse association between men's endorsement of traditional masculinity and their relational closeness with others. Given no reason to suspect that this inverse association changes when explored in the context of father-child relationships specifically, young adult children's perceptions of their father's traditional masculinity should be inversely associated with their reports of relational quality in the father-child relationship (i.e., satisfaction and closeness). To test this line of thinking, the following hypothesis was advanced:

H_1: Young adults' perceptions of their father's traditional masculinity inversely predict their reports of relational satisfaction (H_{1a}) and closeness (H_{1b}) with their father.

Whereas traditional masculinity represents the cultural norm that men have, historically, been expected to enact in order to give a masculine performance (Mahalik et al., 2003), there is evidence to suggest a changing culture of masculinity (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Johansson, 2011; Mormon & Floyd, 2002; Odenweller et al., 2013; Stamps, 2018). One alternative form of masculinity that is emerging in Western societies is known as *nontraditional*, *contemporary*, *progressive*, or *new* masculinity. Like traditional masculinity, which represents one version of the ideal masculine performance (Levant et al., 2019), nontraditional masculinity also has established norms and expectations for men, but these norms and expectations focus on a much different set of ideals (Kaplan et al., 2017; Padgett, 2017; Ratele, 2015). In this study, *nontraditional masculinity* refers to norms and expectations that include emotional openness, gender egalitarianism, an intimacy orientation, cooperation, avoidance of aggression, and the prioritization of family relationships over career success. Unlike traditional masculinity and its focus on toughness, dominance, emotional control, sexual callousness, and physical aggression,

nontraditional masculinity encourages men (and fathers) to be emotionally open and physically involved with their families.

Unlike traditional masculinity, men who endorse nontraditional or contemporary forms of masculinity more often report greater satisfaction in relationships. For example, Wade and Coughlin (2012) found a positive association between nontraditional masculinity (as they defined it to include a flexible view toward the behaviors and norms that men could enact) and relational satisfaction, as well as a negative association between traditional masculinity and satisfaction. Despite the importance of this research, however, scholars have yet to consider and compare how both forms of masculinity are differentially associated with relational outcomes in father-child relationships, although there is preliminary support to suggest that traditional and nontraditional masculinities have opposite associations with relational quality (e.g., Burn & Ward, 2005; Cox & O'Loughlin, 2017; Klann et al., 2018; Mahalik et al., 2005; Marshall, 2008; Wade & Coughlin, 2012).

Take, for example, evidence that men who endorse egalitarian gender roles, which is a component of nontraditional masculinity, are more involved as fathers (Karre, 2016). It seems plausible that children with involved parents should be more satisfied in their relationships with their parents than children with uninvolved parents, and thus, nontraditional masculinity is likely to be positively associated with relational closeness via enhanced parental involvement. In addition, Starcher (2015) found that fathers who emphasized fun and effort as goals of sports, rather than winning alone, were much more satisfied with their father-child relationship. Importantly, these fathers demonstrated the nontraditionally masculine quality of family involvement and had more satisfied relationships with their children than fathers who demonstrated the traditionally masculine qualities of winning and dominance. Hence, the limited

research that does exist on nontraditional masculinity suggests that it may enhance relational quality across a variety of personal relationships. Given indirect evidence that fathers' nontraditional masculinity should be positively associated with relational satisfaction and closeness in their relationships with their children, a second hypothesis was advanced:

H_2: Young adults' perceptions of their father's nontraditional masculinity positively predict their reports of relational satisfaction (H_{2a}) and closeness (H_{2b}) with their father.

Affection and Confirmation as Mediators of Masculinity and Relational Quality

A second, but equally important goal of this investigation was to examine communication behaviors that may function as explanatory mechanisms for the associations between different forms of fathers' masculinity and young adults' reports of relational quality. Specifically, this study focused on affection and confirmation as explanatory mechanisms for the association between masculinity and relational quality in father-child relationships, given that (a) both behaviors are likely to vary as a function of different ideologies of masculinity (Mansson & Sigurðardóttir, 2017; Mormon & Floyd, 1999) and (b) both hold tremendous potential to enhance the personal and relational adjustment of family members (Hesse & Floyd, 2019; Floyd & Mormon, 1998; Mormon & Floyd, 1999; Schrodt et al., 2007).

First, advancing the work of Schutz (1958, 1966), Floyd, Hess, and their colleagues (2005) defined *affectionate communication* as behaviors which convey love and emotional warmth to another person. Three forms of affectionate communication include nonverbal affection, verbal affection, and supportive communication. Whereas nonverbal affection consists of behaviors such as giving a hug, a pat on the back, or a kiss on the cheek, verbal affection involves statements of emotional love and warmth (e.g., "I like you," "I love you") (Floyd, Hess, et al., 2005). Supportive communication consists of behaviors such as sharing private

information, giving compliments, and helping with problems (Floyd & Mormon, 1998). According to Floyd's (2014) affection exchange theory, affectionate communication provides both social and physiological benefits that aid an individual with longevity and procreation, whereas affection deprivation yields harmful personal and relational outcomes, including less social support, relational satisfaction, happiness, general health, and attachment security. These findings demonstrate the necessity of affection for personal and relational well-being.

The propensity to express affection is likely associated with different masculinities based on the characteristics that constitute different forms of masculinity. It stands to reason that men who have a traditional masculinity ideology, characterized by emotional control, self-reliance, dominance, primacy of work (over family), and power over women (Mahalik et al., 2003), are less likely to express affection to their children, particularly as their children develop into adolescents and young adults. There are a number of potential (and likely additive) explanations for how this occurs. First, this may occur because traditionally masculine men often experience discomfort expressing affection and support to their families (Mahalik et al., 2005), self-disclosing (Marshall, 2008), or expressing emotions (Burn & Ward, 2005). In addition, fathers who view power over women, toughness, and dominance as norms and expectations for men may be less likely to express affection through nonverbal, verbal, or supportive communication. Finally, men who prioritize their work lives over family may simply not have the time, energy, or emotional resources necessary to give affectionate communication to their children.

Alternatively, it stands to reason that men who adhere to a nontraditional masculinity ideology, characterized by emotional openness, cooperation, gender egalitarianism, and an intimacy orientation (Padgett, 2017), are more likely to engage in affectionate behaviors with their children regardless of age. Again, this is because emotional openness, intimacy, family

involvement, and cooperation are normative and expected behaviors that align with verbal, nonverbal, and supportive forms of affectionate communication. In other words, the nontraditionally masculine man perceives his family as a priority and makes emotional investments in his spouse and children, plausibly in the form of affectionate communication. Thus, a third hypothesis was forwarded for consideration:

H_3: Young adults' perceptions of their father's traditional masculinity (H_{3a}) inversely predict their reports of their father's affection, whereas perceptions of father's nontraditional masculinity (H_{3b}) positively predict their reports of father's affection.

Likewise, there is an abundance of research linking affection with relational satisfaction in a variety of personal and familial relationships (Curran & Yoshimura, 2016; Floyd & Mormon, 1998, 2000; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010; Martin & Anderson, 1995; Mormon & Floyd, 1999). More specifically, Curran and Yoshimura (2016) found that fathers' affectionate communication is positively associated with family and life satisfaction for both sons and daughters. Likewise, Hesse and colleagues (2018) reported positive associations between parents' affectionate communication and their young adult children's perceptions of relational satisfaction and closeness. Consequently, reports of father's affection should be positively associated with both sons' and daughters' reports of relational satisfaction with their father:

H_4: Young adults' reports of their father's affection are positively associated with their feelings of relational satisfaction (H_{4a}) and closeness (H_{4b}) with their father.

A second, but equally important communication behavior that may mediate the association between children's perceptions of their father's masculinity and father-child relational quality is confirmation. Evolving from the work of Buber (1957), Laing (1961), and Cissna and Sieburg (1981), Ellis (2002) conceptualized *confirmation* as a relational process

which acknowledges and endorses the other person as a respected human being. Confirming behaviors serve to build up a person's self-worth, whereas disconfirming behaviors negate and minimize a person's value. Ellis (2002) found that effective parental confirmation behaviors included genuinely listening when children speak about issues important to them, making statements that acknowledge the child's feelings, asking for the child's opinion, and making meaningful eye contact when conversationally engaged. Disconfirming behaviors included minimizing a child's feelings, interrupting a child in conversations, and giving impersonal responses.

Working to extend and enrich Ellis's (2002) work, which focused primarily on parental acceptance communicated via confirming messages, Dailey (2008b, 2010) added parental challenge as an equally important part of parental confirmation. *Challenge* is defined as enacting communication behaviors that nudge and apply pressure to someone's current abilities, which may lead to strengthened or enhanced affective, behavioral, cognitive, and/or social knowledge and skills (Dailey, 2008b). Challenge behaviors include having others defend their decisions, asking questions, and teaching others how to process their emotions.

Both parental challenge and acceptance are associated with positive personal outcomes and relational outcomes in parent-child relationships. Personal outcomes include increased self-esteem, autonomy, and identity strength (Dailey, 2009, 2010). Children with confirming parents build emotion-processing skills and develop healthy levels of self-sufficiency. Relationally, parental confirmation encourages increased frequency of communication with children (Dailey, 2009), more communication openness (Dailey, 2006), and improved family satisfaction (Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2012). Children who receive more parental confirmation experience more communicative and satisfying relationships with their parents.

Given that traditional masculinity is characterized by emotional restriction, dominance, self-reliance, primacy of work (over family), and winning (Mahalik et al., 2003), one might reason that this form of masculinity would be inversely associated with parental confirmation. Men prone to be dominant and self-reliant may be less concerned about valuing and acknowledging others, specifically their children; moreover, men with stunted emotional capacities may be unable to effectively engage in the perspective-taking necessary to communicate value and respect to others. Traditionally masculine men frequently prioritize work to the detriment of family relationships (Levant, 1992), perhaps making them more likely to give impersonal responses and to have less time and energy to invest in their children. Conversely, nontraditional masculinity is characterized by emotional openness, cooperation, gender egalitarianism, and intimacy orientation (Padgett, 2017). Because nontraditionally masculine men are more emotionally expressive, more likely to seek intimate relationships, and value family, it follows that these men would communicate respect, acknowledge their child's feelings, and engage in interpersonal conversations with them. Contrary to traditional masculinity, then, one might reason that this form of masculinity would be positively associated with parental confirmation. To test these speculations, a fifth hypothesis was advanced:

H_5: Perceptions of fathers' traditional masculinity (H_{5a}) are inversely associated with young adults' reports of father's confirmation, whereas perceptions of fathers' nontraditional masculinity (H_{5b}) are positively associated with their father's confirmation.

In parent-child relationships, Ellis (2002) reported different, but equally important implications of confirmation for sons and daughters. For sons, she found positive associations between parental confirmation and self-worth and self-perceptions of intellectual and creative abilities. For daughters, she found positive associations between father's confirmation and self-

perceptions of physical appearance. For both, Ellis (2002) found that children who perceived their parents to enact confirming behaviors felt more approved and supported in those relationships. In other research, Dailey (2010) found that fathers' challenge and acceptance were both positively associated with their young adult children's self-esteem, identity strength, and autonomy. Her findings corroborated earlier work that demonstrated a positive association between fathers' supportive communication and sons' relational satisfaction (Beatty & Dobos, 1992).

In general, scholars have demonstrated that parental confirmation is positively associated with family satisfaction (Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2012), and in sibling relationships, it is positively associated with relational closeness (Phillips & Schrodt, 2015). When coupled with Ellis's (2002) and Dailey's (2010) findings, then, this body of research suggests that father's confirmation should be positively associated with their young adult children's reports of relational quality (i.e. satisfaction, closeness). To investigate this, a sixth hypothesis was proposed:

H_6: Young adults' reports of their father's confirmation positively predicts their feelings of relational satisfaction (H_{6a}) and closeness (H_{6b}) with father.

Finally, if traditional and nontraditional forms of masculinity prompt fathers to enact affectionate and confirming behaviors to greater or lesser degrees with their children, and if these affectionate and confirming behaviors enhance relational quality (i.e., satisfaction and closeness), then father's affection and confirmation may further explain how different forms of masculinity are associated with satisfaction and closeness in the father-child relationship. Affection and confirmation are positively associated with each other (Schrodt et al., 2007), and given no prior evidence to suggest that one behavior precedes the other in father-child relationships, they were

positioned as parallel (rather than serial) mediators. Therefore, to test affection and confirmation as parallel mediators of father masculinity and relational quality, a final set of hypotheses were advanced:

H_7: Young adults' reports of father's affection (H_{7a}) and confirmation (H_{7b}) function as inverse, parallel mediators of fathers' traditional masculinity and relational quality in father-child relationships (i.e., satisfaction and closeness).

H_8: Young adults' reports of father's affection (H_{8a}) and confirmation (H_{8b}) function as positive, parallel mediators of fathers' nontraditional masculinity and relational quality in father-child relationships (i.e., satisfaction and closeness).

Method

Participants

Participants included 227 young adult children from a private university community in the United States (US). The participants ranged from 18-33 years of age ($M = 19.5$, $SD = 1.6$) and their father's age ranged from 39-72 years ($M = 53.4$, $SD = 5.5$). Participants self-identified more frequently as female ($n = 139$, 61.2%) than as male ($n = 88$, 38.2%), and most of the participants reported that their parents were married ($n = 181$, 79.7%). Most of the participants reported a Caucasian ethnicity (85.9%), with others identifying as Latinx (5.7%), Asian (3.1%), Black (2.6%), American Indian or Native Alaskan (.9%), or other (1.8%). All participants reported that their father was living at the time they completed the survey.

Procedures

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval, student volunteers were recruited within a communication department at a private university. After consenting to participate in the study, participants voluntarily completed an online questionnaire (see Appendix) using Qualtrics

software for minimal class or extra credit (less than 2%). All participation took place outside of regular class time and the survey was completed anonymously. The questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Measures

Perceptions of Father's Traditional Masculinity

Participants' reports of their father's traditional masculinity were assessed using the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory 22-Item Short Form (CMNI-22; Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009). The CMNI-22 contains 22 Likert-type items that measure attitudes, beliefs, and conformity to masculine ideals. In this study, the scale captured participants' perceptions of their father's actions, feelings, and beliefs about being masculine (e.g., "My father makes sure people do as he says," "My father never asks for help," "My father believes that winning isn't everything, it's the only thing"). The CMNI-22 was created by taking the two highest-loading items from each of the 11 subscales reported in the original CMNI-94 item validation study (Reilly et al., 2014). Responses were obtained using a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7), with higher scores indicating perceptions of greater traditional masculinity. Reilly et al. (2014) reported a previous Cronbach's alpha of .73 for the CMNI-22, and in the current study, an initial Cronbach's alpha of .73 was improved to .77 after dropping one item.

Perceptions of Father's Nontraditional Masculinity

Participants' reports of their father's nontraditional masculinity were assessed using Kaplan and colleagues' (2017) New Masculinity Inventory (NMI). The NMI consists of 17 Likert items, which were modified (to focus on fathers, specifically) and expanded into 23 items for the current study to capture perceptions of fathers' attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about new

(or nontraditional) masculinity (e.g., "My father thinks that the distinctions between masculine and feminine characteristics is damaging for both men and women," "My father thinks that involvement in hands-on childcare should play a significant role in men's identities as fathers"). Responses were solicited using a 7-point scale that ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7), with higher scores indicating greater perceptions of fathers' nontraditional masculinity. Kaplan and colleagues (2017) demonstrated the discriminant and convergent validity of the NMI, reporting a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .84 for the measure. In the present study, the expanded 23-item scale produced an alpha coefficient of .94.

Father's Affectionate Communication

Participants' reports of father's affection were measured using Floyd and Mormon's (1998) Affectionate Communication Index (ACI). The ACI contains 19 items that measure the frequency with which a person expresses nonverbal (nine items, e.g., "How frequently does your father put his arm around your shoulder?"), verbal (five items, e.g., How frequently does your father say, 'I like you?'"), and supportive affection (five items, e.g., "How frequently does your father give you compliments?"). Reports were obtained using a 7-point frequency scale that ranged from *never* (1) to *always* (7), with higher scores indicating greater levels of affection received from father. Schrodt and colleagues (2007) reported alpha coefficients ranging from .79 to .86 for the three subscales of the ACI. In the present study, the ACI produced an overall alpha coefficient of .91.

Father's Confirmation

Participants' reports of father confirmation were measured using Ellis's (2002) Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator (PCBI) and Dailey's (2008) 10-item Parental Challenge Questionnaire (PCQ). First, the PCBI scale consists of 28 items that determine the extent to

which participants feel their fathers communicated their value and worth as human beings (e.g., "My father gave me undivided attention when engaged in private conversations," "My father attended the sports events, music events, or other activities in which I participated"). Responses were solicited using a 7-point frequency scale that ranged from *never* (1) to *always* (7), with higher scores representing more frequent father confirmation. Researchers have demonstrated the construct validity and internal reliability of the PCBI (Ellis, 2002; Schrodt et al., 2007), and in this study, the measure produced excellent reliability with an alpha coefficient of .94. Second, the 10-item PCQ measures the extent to which participants feel their fathers pushed and challenged their current abilities, motivating them to grow (e.g., "My father asks questions that make me think," "My father pushes me to discuss my emotions when I am sad or angry"). Responses were solicited using a 7-point frequency scale that ranged from *never* (1) to *always* (7), with higher scores representing more frequent father challenge. Dailey (2008) provided evidence of construct and discriminant validity for the PCQ, as well as an alpha coefficient of .85. In this study, the 10-item scale produced an alpha coefficient of .87.

Relational Satisfaction

Participants' reports of relational satisfaction with their father were measured using an adapted version of Huston et al.'s (1986) Marital Opinion Questionnaire. The referent was changed from spouse to father, and participants were instructed to think about their relationship with their father over the last month. The measure contains 11 items, including 10 items which used 7-point semantic differential scales (e.g., "Free-Tied down," "Rewarding-Disappointing") and an additional item that assessed global satisfaction using a scale that ranged from *completely dissatisfied* (1) to *completely satisfied* (7). The scale has previously demonstrated high internal

reliability with an alpha coefficient of .94 (Schrodt & Phillips, 2016). In the present study, the scale produced an alpha coefficient of .97.

Relational Closeness

Participants' reports of relational closeness with their father were measured using Buchanan et al.'s (1991) relational closeness measure. The scale consists of 10 items (e.g., "How close do you feel to your father?"). Responses were obtained using a 7-point scale that ranged from *not at all* (1) to *very much* (7), with higher scores indicating higher levels of closeness. Previous researchers have demonstrated the internal reliability of the measure with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92 (Schrodt & Phillips, 2016). In the current study, after dropping one of the items, the scale produced an alpha coefficient of .94.

Data Analysis

The first six hypotheses were tested using Pearson's product-moment correlations. The final two hypotheses (i.e., the parallel mediation models) were tested using Model 4 in Hayes's (2018) PROCESS macro in SPSS (v. 3.1) to obtain bias-corrected, accelerated confidence intervals for the indirect effects using 10,000 bootstrapped samples.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and Pearson's product-moment correlations for all variables included in this study, are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlations for All Variables (*N* = 227)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Fathers' TM	3.67	.66	--						
2. Fathers' NTM	4.22	.96	-.50**	--					
3. Acceptance	5.26	1.02	-.59**	.57**	--				
4. Challenge	4.59	1.16	-.44**	.52**	.69**	--			
5. Affection	3.52	1.07	-.36**	.52**	.63**	.64**	--		
6. Satisfaction	5.78	1.32	-.47**	.55**	.73**	.71**	.61**	--	
7. Closeness	5.35	1.46	-.52**	.62**	.80**	.76**	.76**	.82**	--

Note. TM = Traditional Masculinity, NTM = Nontraditional Masculinity.

**$p < .001$

Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if biological sex, participant's age, father's age, length of parents' marriage, parents' divorce status, and amount of talk with father (measured as average amount of time spent talking each week) were significantly associated with relational quality. These analyses revealed no significant associations between participant's age, father's age, or length of parents' marriage and the variables included in the model. There were significant associations, however, between average talk time with father each week and both relational satisfaction ($r = .20$, $p < .01$) and closeness ($r = .24$, $p < .01$). A series of one-way ANOVAs revealed no significant differences in satisfaction with father between sons (*M* = 5.82, *SD* = 1.16) and daughters (*M* = 5.75, *SD* = 1.42) or closeness with father between sons (*M* =

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5.43, $SD = 1.19$) and daughters ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.61$). There were significant differences in both outcomes based on parents' divorce status, however, as participants from intact families were significantly more satisfied in their relationships with their father ($M = 6.09$, $SD = 1.01$) than those from divorced families ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.69$), $F(1, 225) = 61.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .22$, and were significantly closer with their fathers ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.16$) than participants from divorced families ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.95$), $F(1, 225) = 36.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$. Thus, divorce status and average talk time with father were entered as control variables in tests of H7 and H8.

Primary Analysis: Bivariate Associations

H_1 predicted that participants' perceptions of their father's traditional masculinity would be inversely associated with relational satisfaction (H_{1a}) and closeness (H_{1b}). Results indicate that perceptions of father's traditional masculinity are inversely associated with participants' reports of satisfaction ($r = -.47$, $p < .001$) and closeness ($r = -.52$, $p < .001$) with their father. Thus, H_1 was supported.

H_2 predicted that perceptions of father's nontraditional masculinity would be positively associated with their reports of satisfaction (H_{2a}) and closeness (H_{2b}) with their father. The results indicate that perceptions of father's nontraditional masculinity are positively associated with participants' satisfaction ($r = .55$, $p < .001$) and closeness ($r = .62$, $p < .001$) with their father. Thus, H_2 was supported.

H_3 predicted that participants' perceptions of their father's traditional masculinity (H_{3a}) would be inversely associated with their father's affection, whereas perceptions of their father's nontraditional masculinity (H_{3b}) would be positively associated with father's affection. H_3 was also supported, as the results indicate that perceptions of father's traditional masculinity are inversely associated with father's affection ($r = -.36$, $p < .001$), whereas perceptions of their

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father's nontraditional masculinity are positively associated with father's affection ($r = .53$, $p < .001$).

H_4 predicted that perceptions of father's affection would be positively associated with feelings of relational satisfaction (H_{4a}) and closeness (H_{4b}) with father. The results indicate that participants' reports of their father's affection are positively associated with their feelings of satisfaction ($r = .61$, $p < .001$) and closeness ($r = .76$, $p < .001$) with their father, and thus, H_4 was supported.

H_5 predicted that perceptions of father's traditional masculinity (H_{5a}) would be inversely associated with father's confirmation (i.e., acceptance and challenge), whereas perceptions of father's nontraditional masculinity (H_{5b}) would be positively associated with father's confirmation. Again, the results supported this prediction as perceptions of father's traditional masculinity are inversely associated with reports of father acceptance ($r = -.59$, $p < .001$) and challenge ($r = -.44$, $p < .001$), whereas perceptions of father's nontraditional masculinity are positively associated with father acceptance ($r = .57$, $p < .001$) and challenge ($r = .52$, $p < .001$).

H_6 predicted that perceptions of father's confirmation would be positively associated with feelings of relational satisfaction (H_{6a}) and closeness (H_{6b}) with father. This too was supported, as the results reveal that father's acceptance is positively associated with feelings of relational satisfaction ($r = .73$, $p < .001$) and closeness ($r = .80$, $p < .001$) with father, as is father's challenge behaviors and feelings of satisfaction ($r = .71$, $p < .001$) and closeness ($r = .76$, $p < .001$) with father.

Primary Analysis: Parallel Mediation Models

H_7 predicted that participants' reports of father's affection (H_{7a}) and confirmation (H_{7b}) would function as inverse, parallel mediators of the association between father's traditional

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masculinity and relational quality in father-child relationships (i.e., satisfaction and closeness). The first parallel mediation model, which used satisfaction as the criterion variable, yielded a significant multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .82$, $F(6, 220) = 76.14$, $p < .001$, accounting for 67.5% of the shared variance in satisfaction with father. After controlling for divorce status ($b* = .75$, $t = 5.60$, $p < .001$) and average talk time with father ($b* = .02$, $t = 1.47$, $p = .14$), father's acceptance ($b* = .46$, $t = 5.62$, $p < .001$), challenge ($b* = .33$, $t = 4.95$, $p < .001$), and affection ($b* = .15$, $t = 2.28$, $p < .05$) were significant predictors in the model. Bootstrapping analyses revealed significant, negative indirect effects for father's traditional masculinity through reports of father's acceptance ($b = -.383$, $SE = .088$, CI: -.568, -.219), challenge ($b = -.219$, $SE = .063$, CI: -.353, -.104), and affection ($b = -.075$, $SE = .038$, CI: -.154, -.005), respectively, with perceptions of father's traditional masculinity no longer having a significant association with satisfaction ($b* = -.09$, $t = -.92$, $p = .36$). Pairwise comparisons of the indirect effects further revealed that the indirect effects through acceptance ($b = -.308$, $SE = .096$, CI: -.504, -.127) and challenge ($b = -.144$, $SE = .076$, CI: -.307, -.004) were greater in magnitude than the indirect effect through affection, though no significant difference emerged in the magnitude of the indirect effects of these two dimensions of father confirmation ($b = -.164$, $SE = .117$, CI: -.399, .062).

The second parallel mediation model, which used closeness as the criterion variable, also produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .89$, $F(6, 220) = 138.46$, $p < .001$, accounting for 79.1% of the shared variance in closeness. After controlling for both divorce status ($b* = .39$, $t = 3.28$, $p < .01$) and average talk time with father ($b* = .02$, $t = 2.02$, $p < .05$), father's acceptance ($b* = .51$, $t = 7.16$, $p < .001$), challenge ($b* = .30$, $t = 5.07$, $p < .001$), and affection ($b* = .43$, $t = 7.26$, $p < .001$) emerged as significant predictors in the model.

Bootstrapping analyses revealed significant, negative indirect effects for father's traditional masculinity on closeness through father's acceptance (b = -.431, SE = .093, CI: -.621, -.259), challenge (b = -.199, SE = .053, CI: -.309, -.104), and affection (b = -.211, SE = .051, CI: -.309, -.111), with perceptions of father's traditional masculinity no longer predicting relational closeness (b^* = -.13, t = -1.55, p = .12). Pairwise comparisons further revealed that only the indirect effect through father acceptance was greater in magnitude than those that emerged through father challenge (b = -.233, SE = .105, CI: -.449, -.035) and affection (b = -.220, SE = .093, CI: -.418, -.048), neither of which were significantly different in magnitude from each other (b = .013, SE = .068, CI: -.126, .142). Overall, the results of both parallel mediation models provided support for H_7.

H_8 predicted that participants' reports of father's affection (H_{8a}) and confirmation (H_{8b}) function as positive, parallel mediators of the association between father's nontraditional masculinity and relational quality in father-child relationships (i.e., satisfaction and closeness). The first of two parallel mediation models, which used relational satisfaction as the criterion variable, produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient, R = .82, $F(6, 220)$ = 77.30, p < .001, accounting for 67.8% of the shared variance in satisfaction. After controlling for divorce status (b^* = .74, t = 5.54, p < .001) and average talk time with father (b^* = .01, t = 1.39, p = .17), father acceptance (b^* = .45, t = 5.95, p < .001) and challenge (b^* = .32, t = 4.80, p < .001), but not affection (b^* = .13, t = 1.89, p = .06), emerged as significant predictors in the model. Bootstrapping analyses revealed significant, positive indirect effects for father's nontraditional masculinity through father acceptance (b = .251, SE = .055, CI: .149, .366) and challenge (b = .176, SE = .051, CI: .086, .286), but not through father's affection (b = .067, SE = .038, CI: -.009, .142). Likewise, perceptions of father's nontraditional masculinity were no longer a significant

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predictor of satisfaction in the model ($b* = .12$, $t = 1.76$, $p = .08$). Pairwise comparisons revealed no significant difference between the magnitude of the indirect effects that emerged through the two dimensions of father confirmation ($b = .075$, $SE = .083$, CI: -.094, .234).

Finally, the second parallel mediation model used to test H_8 (i.e., with closeness as the criterion variable) yielded a significant multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .89$, $F(6, 220) = 142.10$, $p < .001$, accounting for 79.5% of the shared variance in closeness. After controlling for divorce status ($b* = .38$, $t = 3.19$, $p < .01$) and average talk time with father ($b* = .02$, $t = 1.91$, $p = .06$), father acceptance ($b* = .51$, $t = 7.68$, $p < .001$), challenge ($b* = .28$, $t = 4.88$, $p < .001$), and affection ($b* = .40$, $t = 6.66$, $p < .001$) all emerged as significant predictors in the model. Bootstrapping analyses revealed significant, positive indirect effects for father's nontraditional masculinity through father acceptance ($b = .285$, $SE = .057$, CI: .178, .400), challenge ($b = .157$, $SE = .038$, CI: .086, .238), and affection ($b = .208$, $SE = .039$, CI: .134, .286). Contrary to the three previous models, however, perceptions of father's nontraditional masculinity remained a significant predictor of closeness after controlling for the mediating variables in the model ($b* = .16$, $t = 2.65$, $p < .01$). Likewise, pairwise comparisons of the indirect effects revealed no significant differences in the magnitudes of the indirect effects among the three parallel mediators. Taken as a whole, the results of both mediation models supported H_8.

Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to explore how young adults' perceptions of their father's masculinity are associated with relational quality in father-child relationships (i.e., closeness and satisfaction). A second goal was to test a potential explanation for how masculinity is associated with relational quality via the communicative behaviors of affection and confirmation. Not only were both forms of father masculinity associated with both relational

outcomes in expected ways, but perceptions of father's affection and confirmation appear to be particularly robust explanatory mechanisms that extend our understanding of how their masculinity may enhance (or inhibit) relational quality with their young adult children. Consequently, the results of this study provide at least three implications worth noting.

Masculinity and Relational Quality in Father-Child Relationships

First, the results provide further clarity and support for associations between perceptions of fathers' masculinities and young adults' reports of relational quality with father. Unlike previous studies that mostly examined masculinity from a single vantage point, the present study compared how two differing forms of masculinity are associated with relational quality in the context of a father-child relationship. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Klann et al., 2018; Starcher, 2015), the results of this study suggest that a father's enactment of traditional masculinity (particularly hypermasculinity) may undermine the quality of his relationships with his children, at least in terms of his children's satisfaction and closeness. One explanation for these associations is that fathers with highly traditional forms of masculinity may lack the knowledge, motivation, and/or skill to enact those behaviors which typically enhance relational quality with their children, such as self-disclosure, openness, and affection. If these behaviors threaten their masculine ideology and/or their idea of what it means to be a "real man," it may create discomfort or dissonance that prevents them from enacting such behaviors with their children. In terms of knowledge, some traditionally masculine men, upon becoming fathers, may have never had healthy communication patterns modeled for them when they were being raised by their own fathers. Without proper socialization and modeling of healthy father-child relationships in their families-of-origin, these men may lack the self-efficacy and/or communication skills to engage in the kinds of communication behaviors that enhance relational

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quality with their children. On the other hand, it could be that fathers who are more traditionally masculine possess an orientation toward work-family life balance that precludes them from having high-quality relationships with their children. For instance, if a hypermasculine man believes that his role is to protect and provide, and he privileges work life over family involvement, he may work long hours to care for his family precisely because he believes that that is the primary way to care for and support his children. However, his children may view his long hours at work and his prioritization of work over family involvement as dissatisfying impediments to their relationship. Thus, future research is needed to further explore *why* traditionally masculine men are less likely to engage in the kinds of communication behaviors that enhance relational quality across all types of personal relationships.

Contrary to the inverse associations between traditional masculinity and relational quality in father-child relationships, the results further revealed positive associations between nontraditional masculinity and both relational outcomes. For fathers perceived by their children as enacting nontraditional or new forms of masculinity, there may be numerous explanations for why their children report higher quality relationships. First, these fathers may find behaviors that lead to higher quality relationships (e.g., self-disclosure, openness, affection), in general, to be less threatening to their sense of fatherhood and manhood. Second, given changes in masculinity and parental involvement that have emerged over time, these men may have had fathers who were traditionally masculine and with whom they had less than satisfying and close relationships. As a result, they may have consciously decided to be quite different with their own masculinity and fatherhood practices. This line of reasoning is consistent with Mormon and Floyd's (2002) discussion of a cyclical nature of fatherhood, where successive generations father differently than their fathers based partially on what they wish their fathers would have done. Finally, a third

explanation is that men may hold shifting attitudes and beliefs about what is important or serves as a priority between work and family life. Whereas traditionally masculine men may perceive that effective fathering involves little more than providing for their children financially and protecting them physically, nontraditionally masculine men may believe that fathering involves so much more, particularly relationally as they attempt to meet many of the emotional needs of their children. In other words, part of newer conceptualizations of masculinity involve re-prioritizing family identities, involvement, and engagement over professional obligations and identities. Thus, with the re-ordering of how time, energy, and effort is divided between their work and family lives, these men may be more likely to enact the communication behaviors and ways of relating to their children that enhance their children's satisfaction and closeness as young adults. Future research that explores men's own understandings of how and why they enact their masculinity and how their masculinity is tied to their fathering practices may extend the findings for relational quality reported here.

Father Masculinity and Affection with Children

The second set of implications to emerge from this study revolves around the direct associations between father's masculinity and young adults' reports of father's affection, as well as the indirect effects of masculinity on relational quality through father's affection. With traditional masculinity (especially hypermasculinity) comes beliefs in restricted emotionality, independence, toughness, and dominance. These beliefs, in turn, may inhibit traditionally masculine men from conveying love and emotional warmth to their children through affectionate behavior. That is, a man who thinks that men are not supposed to show weakness or convey emotions may not be as comfortable or as willing to complement his children, hug them, share private information with them, or express their love through other nonverbal affection displays.

Such men may entirely avoid communicating with their children in ways that are loving or emotionally warm. On the other hand, traditionally masculine men may attempt to communicate love to children both verbally (e.g., giving financial advice, pointing out areas for improvement) and nonverbally (e.g., slap on the back, handshake). However, their actions may fail to convey the *emotional warmth* that characterizes affectionate communication, thereby preventing their children from perceiving the loving intent behind it.

Men who are nontraditionally masculine value acceptance and emotional openness, are intimacy oriented, and prioritize family life. Because of these values, these men are perhaps more likely to prioritize expressions of love and warmth (or affection) to their children. Whereas traditionally masculine men may fear coming across as weak or vulnerable and thus, possess a completely different view of fatherhood, men who enact new or nontraditional masculinity may view emotional displays and investments in their family as signs of strength and as a fulfillment of their responsibilities as fathers. Specifically, these men's desires for emotional openness may facilitate their statements of love and emotional warmth with their children. Nontraditionally masculine men also place a high value on acceptance, which in turn might compel them to communicate support and love to their children to ensure they feel accepted.

As hypothesized, affection also inversely mediated the relationship between perceptions of father's traditional masculinity and young adults' reports of father-child relational quality. Not only does this replicate prior research connecting affection with relational quality (Floyd & Mormon, 1998, 2000), but it extends prior research on masculinity by positioning affectionate behavior as a meaningful mechanism through which father's traditional masculinity inhibits relational quality with children. This process may occur for one or more reasons. First, the value that traditionally masculine men place on independence may discourage them from

communicating support to their children because doing so is viewed as antithetical to cultivating

independence in their children, thereby creating a barrier for relational quality. Second,

traditionally masculine fathers may refrain from verbal statements that convey love and warmth

because they endorse restricted emotionality, reducing their children's opportunities to feel

relationally close and satisfied. Such men may also be unwilling to convey affection nonverbally

to their children for fear that others may view it as a sign of weakness or vulnerability, both of

which run counter to the traditionally masculine ideals of dominance and power over others. The

limitations of cross-sectional, correlational data notwithstanding, the results suggest that

traditionally masculine fathers may be less verbally affectionate, nonverbally affectionate, and

supportive of their young adult children, which in turn diminishes their children's satisfaction

and closeness with them.

Conversely, participants who perceived their father as being nontraditionally masculine

reported higher levels of affection from their father that, in turn, positively predicted their

satisfaction and closeness. Perhaps their orientation toward intimacy leads nontraditionally

masculine men to gravitate toward expressing all three forms of affection that fosters relational

closeness and satisfaction with their children. On the other hand, young adult children may report

close and satisfying relationships with their father due to their father's cooperative tendencies

that create opportunities for shared tasks and supportive communication. Regardless of the

specific attribute of masculinity that motivates fathers to express affection, the ideological

difference in what constitutes masculinity may motivate nontraditional men to be loving in

affectionate ways, thereby helping to foster close and satisfying relationships with their children.

Father Masculinity and Confirmation with Children

The third set of implications to emerge from this study revolves around the direct associations between father's masculinity and young adults' reports of father's confirmation, as well as the indirect effects of masculinity on relational quality through father's confirmation. Given beliefs and values of traditionally masculine men, the idea of communicating that they value, acknowledge, and respect the opinions and feelings of others, particularly in a domestic setting, may come into conflict with these traditionally masculine beliefs, leading men to be less confirming in their father-child relationships. Specifically, with regards to the challenge component of confirmation, traditionally masculine men may be likely to challenge but less likely to challenge in healthy ways. For instance, their beliefs in power over women and dominance may lead them to challenge their children, but not in ways that signify respect and are confirming.

Conversely, fathers perceived as being nontraditionally masculine are more likely to accept and challenge their children to grow as individuals in confirming ways. Confirming behaviors, which signify that parents value, acknowledge, and respect their children as individuals, may emerge as a result of family communication environments in which openness is valued. For instance, Schrodt and colleagues (2007) found that parental confirmation was negatively associated with a conformity orientation and positively associated with a conversation orientation. Based on their preferences for emotional disclosure and communication frequency, nontraditionally masculine men may help create and foster family environments that are more open, and thus, more confirming than their traditionally masculine counterparts. In addition, nontraditionally masculine men, who support gender egalitarianism (Padgett, 2017), may work together with their wives to play a bigger role (relative to traditionally masculine men who value

dominance and control) in shaping the communicative environments of their homes. In this instance, there may additive or interactive effects between the communication of husbands and wives in creating open family environments that result in satisfying father-child relationships. Given that parental confirmation mediates the positive effects of a conversation orientation on the mental well-being of children (Schrodt et al., 2007), the results of the present study also indicate that children who grow up with nontraditionally masculine fathers may be more likely to benefit health-wise. Considering these findings, scholars should investigate the health implications for children based on the masculinity orientation of their fathers. For instance, hypermasculine fathers create gender role stress for their sons (Klann et al., 2018) and children of traditionally masculine fathers have lower general well-being (Rochlen et al., 2008). Consequently, future scholars can expand upon the results of this study by further examining the broader mental and physical health implications (e.g., self-esteem, perceived stress, well-being) for children of fathers who are traditionally versus nontraditionally masculine.

As hypothesized, confirmation also inversely mediated the relationship between perceptions of father's traditional masculinity and young adults' reports of father-child relational quality. Perhaps traditionally masculine fathers' values of dominance and competitiveness lead them to be less confirming in their interactions. This would make sense considering Starcher's (2015) findings that children of fathers who emphasized winning and skill development reported less satisfying relationships with their fathers. Fathers who are traditionally masculine are less likely to communicate with their children in confirming ways, which in turn may further diminish the quality of their relationships with their children. One explanation for this involves the dominant and competitive stance that traditionally masculine men take toward others, particularly those with whom they have interpersonal conflict. In their home, fathers may view

dominance over their families as an appropriate expression of leadership and guidance (however mis-guided this may actually be). Valuing competitiveness and dominance, in turn, may motivate these fathers to interact with their children in ways that treat their children more as ego representations of themselves and the family than as unique individuals worthy of value and respect. Not only would these attitudes discourage genuine expressions of acceptance toward their children, but if they challenge their children to become better individuals, their challenges may nevertheless be conveyed in disconfirming rather than confirming ways.

Conversely, confirmation positively mediated the relationship between perceptions of father's nontraditional masculinity and young adults' reports of father-child relational quality. One possible explanation for this is that confirming behaviors take time to develop and to practice, and nontraditionally masculine men may be willing to put in the time and effort to care for their children by engaging in such behaviors. Karre (2016) found that fathers who held more egalitarian gender views were more involved as fathers, and thus, it may be that nontraditionally masculine fathers' egalitarian gender views push them to be more involved with their children, in turn fostering closer and more satisfying relationships with their children.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the findings from this study support and extend the ongoing work surrounding the construct of masculinity, confirmation theory, and affection exchange theory. They provide further validation for the recently developed measure of new masculinity (Kaplan et al., 2017), and extend gender research on masculinity by considering both forms in the context of father-child relationships. Whereas scholars have found that behaviors such as self-disclosure (Marshall, 2008) and emotion sharing (Burn & Ward, 2005) mediate the association between masculinity and relational quality, the present study adds confirmation and affection as

meaningful explanatory mechanisms for this association that carry other implications for the mental and emotional health of fathers and their children.

The results also extend confirmation theory by positioning it as a correlate of father's masculinity and as a meaningful mechanism linking masculinity to relational satisfaction and closeness. Like Schrodt and colleagues (2007), who found that confirmation may emanate from different family communication patterns, this finding provides a similar but distinct source from which confirmation may vary, thereby extending confirmation theory by considering a parent's gender ideology as a predictor of parental confirmation. To the extent that parental confirmation fundamentally alters how children come to view themselves, both as individuals (Dailey, 2008, 2010; Ellis, 2002) and in relationships to others (Young & Schrodt, 2016), parental endorsements of different forms of masculinity become key antecedents to the individual and relational health of children as they age and mature into young adults who may one day develop families of their own.

Likewise, the findings support affection exchange theory by illustrating the relational benefits of affectionate communication in father-child relationships (e.g., satisfaction, closeness) and by identifying affection received from fathers as a meaningful, explanatory mechanism that connects father's masculinity to relational quality with children. In addition to the biological dispositions and advantages of giving and receiving affection (Floyd, 2016), this study illustrates that young adults' reports of affection received from fathers emanates, at least in part, from the gender orientation of the father, which is socially taught and constructed. A father's willingness to communicate affection to his children may vary as much from his socialized gender beliefs as from the biologically benefits that may accrue for himself and his progeny. However, given no specific comparisons of the biological and socialized sources of affection expression between

fathers and their children in this study, future researchers should explore the extent to which affection in father-child relationships originates in biologically transmitted traits compared to conscious choices deriving from socialization and environmental conditions.

In addition to the theoretical implications of this report, a practical implication is that parenting education programs may be able to use this knowledge to enhance fathers' understandings of communication behaviors that enhance relational quality with their children. Although men's masculinity is like to be deeply engrained by the time they become fathers, understanding the differences between traditional and new masculinity may open their eyes to the (un)intended consequences of holding some of these traditional beliefs. Also, given the differences in relational quality based on divorce status and that most nonresidential parents are fathers who may be looking for ways to stay connected with their children, the findings underscore the importance of affection and confirmation to maintaining close and satisfying relationships with their young adult children. Schrodt and Ledbetter (2012) found that parent confirmation (i.e., mother confirmation) helped mitigate the negative association that feeling caught had on family satisfaction for kids from divorced families. In a related way, the present findings may suggest that father affection and confirmation are critical behaviors for maintaining close and satisfying relationships with their children, especially for nonresidential fathers in divorced families.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite these implications, the findings from the present study should be interpreted with caution given the inherent limitations of the research design. First, although it is plausible that a man's gender orientation is likely established prior to entering fatherhood and thus precedes the enactment of affectionate and confirming behaviors with children, causal claims cannot be made

about the associations found within the present study due to the cross-sectional research design. In addition, fathers' masculinity was measured based solely on the perceptions of young adult children rather than asking fathers directly about their own masculinity. However, what individuals perceive as real has real consequences, and thus, children's perceptions may be more influential for how children perceive their father's affectionate and confirming behavior, as well as how they feel about their relationship with their father, than what fathers themselves report. Future researchers can extend the findings of this study by recruiting father-child dyads and examining the actor and partner effects of father masculinity on relational quality in father-child relationships. Perhaps a more important limitation is the homogenous nature of the sample and the degree to which the sample limits the generalizability of the findings to predominantly Caucasian, affluent, college-educated young adults. Although there is little reason to suspect that the robust associations reported here would not exist in other populations, nevertheless, future research incorporating the experiences of a more ethnically and culturally diverse group of fathers and children is needed.

These limitations aside, this study was the first of its kind to compare two forms of masculinity within the context of father-child relationships, joining a small number of investigations that have examined multiple forms of masculinity in the same study (albeit in different relationship types) (e.g., Wade & Coughlin, 2012). One way to extend the findings reported here would be to continue exploring and refining new or more modern conceptualizations of masculinity. Within the masculinity literature, there is a lot of variance in how masculinity is conceptualized and measured. Thus, communication scholars have a tremendous opportunity to explore how different forms of masculinity are expressed and perceived by parents and their children, not just with fathers. For instance, how might mothers'

masculinity be associated with satisfying and close mother-child relationships? How might mothers' and fathers' co-parenting interactions reflect different degrees of assertiveness and competition that hinder (or perhaps, enhance) their children's relationships with each parent? Although the present study identified affection and confirmation as explanatory mechanisms, future research might test other communication behaviors that further explain associations between masculinity and relational quality in a variety of familial and personal relationships. To that end, incorporating longitudinal and dyadic research designs will enable scholars to more clearly test and disentangle the precise, causal mechanisms that tie different gender orientations to communication behaviors that enhance (or inhibit) relational quality. Future research might also consider how men's masculinity, more generally, and their perceptions and understandings of fatherhood, specifically, are socialized via their interactions with their fathers and grandfathers, as well as other men in their social networks. This direction might inform understandings of how masculinity is transmitted intergenerationally within different families, as well as culturally via peer interactions. Through these types of investigations, scholars can broaden our understanding of how masculinity enhances relational quality in parent-child relationships.

Appendix A

Survey Measures and Demographic Information

Affection

Directions: In this next section, please circle the number that indicates how frequently your *FATHER* engages in each of the following behaviors *with you* using the following response scale:

	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Occasionally (3)	Sometimes (4)	Often (5)	Very Often (6)	Always (7)
Hold hands	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Kiss on lips	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Kiss on cheeks	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Give massages	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Puts arm around shoulder	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Hugs	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Sits close	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Look into your eyes	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Winks at you	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Says "You're a good friend"	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Says "I like you"	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Says "I love you"	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Says "You're my best friend"	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Says how important your relationship is	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Helps you with problems	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Occasionally (3)	Sometimes (4)	Often (5)	Very Often (6)	Always (7)
Acknowledges your birthday	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Shares private information	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Gives you compliments	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Praises your accomplishments	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Confirmation (Acceptance & Challenge)

<u>Directions:</u> In this next section, please circle the number that indicates how frequently your *FATHER* engages in each of the following behaviors using the following response scale:

	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Occasionally (3)	Sometimes (4)	Often (5)	Very Often (6)	Always (7)
Went off on unrelated tangents during conversations with me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Gave ambiguous (unclear, vague) responses.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father exposed me to different experiences.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Gave impersonal responses (e.g., loaded with clichés or responses that did not truly respond to me).	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Sent double messages (verbal and nonverbal messages that differed).	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father allowed me to make my own decisions even though I might make a few mistakes.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Interrupted me during conversations.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Ascribed motives to my actions (e.g., made statements like,	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

"You're only doing this because . . .").							
My father and I had playful arguments about ideas.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Criticized my feelings when I expressed them.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Engaged in monologue (continued on and on with whatever he had to say, failing to acknowledge anything I had said or tried to interject).	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father made me deal with the consequences of my decisions or behaviors.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Allowed me to express negative feelings.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Avoided physical contact such as touching, hugging, pats on the back, etc.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Reserved uninterrupted time with me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Gave clear, direct responses to me during conversations.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Maintained meaningful eye contact with me when we were engaged in a conversation.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Made statements that communicated my ideas didn't count (e.g., "Can't you do anything right?" "Just shut up and keep out of this" or "What do	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

you know about this anyway?")	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Demonstrated that he was genuinely listening when I was speaking about issues important to me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Attended the sports events, music events, or other activities in which I participated.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Made statements that communicated to me that I was a unique, valuable human being.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father helped me channel my negative emotions into more positive actions.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Belittled me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Engaged in negative name calling (labeling).	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father asked questions that made me think.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Made statements that communicated my feelings were valid and real (e.g., made statements like, "I'm sorry that you're so disappointed, angry, etc.").	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Gave me undivided attention when engaged in private conversations.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father asked me to explain the reasoning behind my decisions.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Asked how I felt about school, family issues, punishments, etc.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gave appropriate facial responses such as smiling or nodding during conversations with me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My father pushed me to set goals in my sports activities.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Asked my opinion or solicited my viewpoint.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Discounted or explained away my feelings.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My father discussed different perspectives with me regarding complex issues.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Used killer glances (put-down looks).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ignored me while in the same room.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My father pushed me to discuss my emotions when I was sad or angry.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ignored my attempts to express my feelings.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Closeness

Instructions: We would like to know about how close you feel with your *FATHER*. Circle the number that best indicates how close you feel: 1 = "*Not at all*," 4 = "*Moderately*," and 7 = "*Very Much,*" or somewhere in between.

	Not at all (1)	(2)	(3)	Moderately (4)	(5)	(6)	Very much (7)
How openly do you talk with your father?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How careful do you feel you have to be about what you say to your father?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How comfortable do you feel admitting doubts and fears to your father?	o		o	o	o		o	o	o
How interested is your father when you talk to each other?	o		o	o	o		o	o	o
How often does your father express affection or liking for you?	o		o	o	o		o	o	o
How well does your father know what you are really like?	o		o	o	o		o	o	o
How close do you feel to your father?	o		o	o	o		o	o	o
How confident are you that your father would help you if you had a problem?	o		o	o	o		o	o	o
If you need money, how comfortable are you asking your father for it?	o		o	o	o		o	o	o
How interested is your father in the things you do?	o		o	o	o		o	o	o

Satisfaction

Instructions**:** We would like you to think about your relationship with your **FATHER** over the last month. Please circle the number that most closely describes your feelings toward *your father* over the past month.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
Miserable	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Enjoyable
Hopeful	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Discouraging
Free	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Tied Down
Empty	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Full
Interesting	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Boring
Rewarding	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Disappointing
Doesn't give me much chance	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Brings out the best in me
Lonely	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Friendly

Hard	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Easy
Worthwhile	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Useless

All things considered, how satisfied have you been with your relationship with your father the last month?

o 1. Extremely satisfied

o 2. Moderately satisfied

o 3. Slightly satisfied

o 4. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

o 5. Slightly dissatisfied

o 6. Moderately dissatisfied

o 7. Extremely dissatisfied

Nontraditional (New) Masculinity

<u>Directions:</u> Thinking about *your father's* actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. There are no correct or wrong answers to the items. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your father's actions, feelings and beliefs.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
My father makes an effort to eat nutritious foods because he is paying attention to his body for more than mere health reasons.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father tries to achieve full harmony between mind and body.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father attempts to know himself	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

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by paying attention to his body and its needs.							
My father always emphasizes dialogue and listening to others as a way of life.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that society's definition of masculinity is partial and incomplete.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that society's definition of masculinity is too restrictive.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father follows his heart in ways that society deems "unmanly."	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father follows his inclinations in ways that society deems "unmanly."	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father appreciates men who are willing to take up "feminine" jobs in order to increase their personal satisfaction.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

My father appreciates men who are willing to take up less profitable jobs in order to increase their personal satisfaction.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that the distinction between masculine and feminine characteristics is damaging for both men and women.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that the distinction between masculine and feminine roles is damaging for both men and women.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that men should be able to express their feelings at work the same way they do at home or with friends.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that men should let themselves express the various aspects of their personality	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

with equal ease at work, at home, and with friends.							
My father thinks that men should be encouraged to share their feelings and concerns more often with others.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that men should be encouraged to share their feelings and concerns more openly with others.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father constantly searches for meaning.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father constantly strives for personal development and growth.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that involvement in hands-on childcare should play a significant role in men's identities as fathers.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that helping one's children	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

develop their true selves is a more important part of fatherhood than focusing on their financial well-being.							
My father thinks that his career should not come at the expense of his family.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that his career should not come at the expense of his friends.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that his career should not come at the expense of his hobbies.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Traditional Masculinity

Directions: *Thinking about your father's actions, feelings and beliefs,* please indicate how much *you agree or disagree with each statement.* There are no correct or wrong answers to the items. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your father's actions, feelings and beliefs.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Work is the most important part of my father's life.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father makes sure people do as he says.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
In general, my father doesn't	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

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enjoy risky situations.						
My father thinks it would be awful if someone thought he was gay.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father prefers that men be in charge of women.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father likes to talk about his feelings.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father would enjoy having many sexual partners.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
It is important to my father that people think he is heterosexual.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father believes that violence is never justified for men.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that men should share their feelings.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks that men should be in charge.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father would hate to be important.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father thinks sometimes violent action is necessary.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father doesn't like giving all his attention to work.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
More often than not, my father is	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

bothered by losing.							
My father would frequently change sexual partners if he could.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father doesn't do things to standout or be important to people.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father never asks for help.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father enjoys taking risks.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father respects women as equals.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father believes that winning isn't everything, it's the only thing.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
My father is bothered when he has to ask for help.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Demographic Information

What is your age?

What is your biological sex (please select one)?
o   Male

o   Female

What is your current classification in school?

o   Freshman

o   Sophomore

o   Junior

o   Senior

o   Graduate student

o   Other (please specify) _____

What is your current classification in school?

o   Freshman

o   Sophomore

o   Junior

o   Senior

o   Graduate student

o   Other (please specify) _____

What is your ethnicity or race?

o   White

o   Black or African American

o   American Indian or Alaska Native

o   Asian

o   Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

o   Other (please specify) _____

Is your father still living?

o   Yes

o   No

o   Unknown

If your father is still living, how old is he? _____

If your parents are still married, how long have they been married (in years)? _____

Are your biological (or adoptive) parents divorced (circle)?
o   Yes

o   No

If you answered "yes" to question the previous question, approximately how long has it been since your parents divorced? _____

If your parents are divorced, how long were they married before they divorced? _____

If your parents are divorced, did either of them get remarried?
o   Mom only remarried

o   Dad only remarried

o   Both parents remarried (separately)

o   Both parents remarried (each other)

o   Neither parent has remarried

On average, how often do you talk with your MOTHER during a typical week?
o   Hours _____

o   Minutes_____

On average, how often do you talk with your FATHER during a typical week?
o   Hours _____

o   Minutes_____

What is your sexual orientation?

o   Bisexual

o   Gay

o   Lesbian

o   Straight (heterosexual)

o   Questioning or unsure

o   An option not listed: please specify _____

o   Prefer not to disclose

What is your father's sexual orientation?

o   Bisexual

o   Gay

o   Straight (heterosexual)

o   Questioning or unsure

o   An option not listed: please specify _____

o   Prefer not to disclose

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF FATHERS' AFFECTION AND CONFIRMATION AS MEDIATORS OF
MASCULINITY AND RELATIONAL QUALITY IN FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

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Comparing traditional and nontraditional (or "new") forms of masculinity, this study

tested the associations among young adult children's perceptions of their father's masculinity

and their reports of father-child relational quality (i.e., satisfaction and closeness). It also tested

father's affection and confirmation as parallel mediators of the associations between perceptions

of father's masculinity and father-child relational quality. Results from 227 participants who

completed online surveys measures supported this line of reasoning. Whereas perceptions of

father's traditional masculinity were inversely associated with reports of father's affection,

confirmation, and both relational outcomes, perceptions of new masculinity were positively

associated with both communication behaviors and relational outcomes. Likewise, reports of

father's acceptance and challenge (i.e., two components of confirmation) and affection

functioned as parallel mediators for these associations. The results extend affection exchange

theory and confirmation theory by positioning both communication behaviors as explanatory

mechanisms for father masculinity and relational quality in father-child relationships.

Keywords: masculinity, relational quality, father-child, affection, confirmation