

## **Toward Gender Harmony – Understanding the Relationship between Masculinity Threat and Gender Equality Across Cultures – summary for general public**

It has been 30 years since large cross-cultural study has been carried testing the contemporary understanding of masculinity and femininity. Our project undertakes such a study in at least 20 cultures to see what men and women are like and what they should do, what they should be and should do, and which behaviours and traits they should refrain from. What is more our project examines the universality of gender stereotypes about men who, according to results of research (carried out so far mainly within Western cultural contexts) must conform to norms such as agency, dominance, pursuit of high social status, and avoidance of femininity. Men have greater structural power than women in most cultures, but manhood status itself is elusive and competitive – or “hard won and easily lost” – according to Precarious Manhood Theory. However the question of the universality of the precariousness of manhood across cultural contexts, and the factors that threaten manhood, have not yet been tested.

In my 36-month research project our team of international researchers will conduct 5 cross-cultural studies with over 10000 participants. In sampling cultures I will ensure the normal distribution of individualistic-collectivistic cultures and countries with different gender equality levels. Like in most cross-cultural psychology studies, I will depend mostly on student samples, although I will try to supplement the student sample with a more general public sample in at least six cultures. We will carry out the back-translation procedures, and test for the equivalence of the collected data sets. All studies will be carried out with special attention paid to the ethical approach towards all involved participants in all countries.

Our project will also allow us to explore what kinds of violations in traits and in behaviour might lead to masculinity threat in a given cultural context – as cultural values moderate the contents of gender stereotypes we might expect that in collectivistic countries, the agency mandate for men might be of lesser importance. Similarly, in countries with higher gender equality levels where similarities between male and female roles are more common we might expect that the anti-femininity mandate will be of lesser importance. Our data will also help us to investigate if and how men in different cultures compensate for the loss in their gender status. The specific traits and behaviors men should avoid in order to secure their manhood will depend on stereotypes regarding typical feminine and masculine traits in a given cultural context. This can also reflect cultural values that are salient in a given society (in a given period). Hence if social or cultural contexts encourage men to be more communal, less anti-feminine, less high status oriented and less dominant in their behavior, we predict that showing more communal, feminine, less dominant, less status-oriented tendencies in their behaviour might not be as threatening. And lastly and most importantly, our project will help us examine gender status threat from the perspective of on-going pro-equality, anti-discriminatory movements focused on women’s rights – we will explore how reminders of increases in women’s status and visibility across cultures affect men’s gender role attitudes. Specifically, we hypothesize that reminders of such movements might constitute a manhood threat (by challenging men’s dominance over women), and if so, whether men compensate for this threat by lowering their support for gender equality movements, but mainly in countries with lower gender equality levels.

The proposed empirical studies will cover at least 20 countries. In order to meet this goal, I established international consortium of scholars with leading role of Jennifer Bosson from University of South Florida (along with Joseph Vandello) who are experts in social psychology and gender with special focus on manhood threat, experienced in cross-cultural comparisons and have wide international contacts to recruit collaborators. Our international consortium will build on, and go beyond, Precarious Manhood Theory by bringing a cross-cultural perspective focusing the relationship between descriptive, prescriptive and proscriptive male gender stereotypes and gender equality movements across the world. Additional, it has been 30 years since last such large cross-cultural study has been completed – and it is thus interesting to see what is the contemporary understanding of masculinity and femininity. Our results might be also important in understanding mechanisms relating to gender egalitarianism around the world. Such a project requires well-defined consortium to carry out our research plan and achieve our four scientific goals.