

## **Program Effect: Traditional Masculinity Beliefs**

A Mixed-Method study<sup>1</sup> of The Council for Boys & Young Men examined the program effect on *traditional masculinity beliefs* of young men during 2009-10 in the Ohio Department of Youth Services (OH DYS), a prison population with multiple sites identified as either control or experimental groups. Adherence to traditional masculinity ideology has been linked to poor health and behavior outcomes<sup>2</sup>.

### **Participants**

The participants' age ranged from 12 to 20 (M = 16.37; SD = 7.45) at baseline. The majority of the study's participants identified as African American (n = 810; 65%), followed by White (n = 310; 25%), and Latino (n = 29; 2%). The remaining youth identified as Asian, Native American, multiple ethnicities, other, or did not respond.

### **Results**

Traditional masculinity beliefs increased across both control and experimental populations in the study. While no program effect was found for the experimental group in comparison to the control group, when controlling for participant's age, race/ethnicity, and study location, the study found that some youth who completed pre- and post-surveys in the experimental group had in fact attended little or no actual sessions, suggesting a possible interference of accurate analysis of effects. **When dosage was analyzed amongst experimental group participants, the study did find a program effect:**

- Youth who attended more sessions at 10 weeks of programming, and again at 20 weeks of programming showed a *significantly lower rate of increase of traditional masculinity beliefs* than those who attended fewer sessions.

### **Concluding remarks (excerpt):**

“The finding that change in masculinity ideology is effected by program dosage has important implications for the continued implementation of The Council at ODYS facilities and other prison locations. Because adherence to traditional masculinity ideology has been linked both to poor health and behavior outcomes, a program's effectiveness at decreasing levels of adherence (or weakening the level of increase) is practically important. In particular, youth in the current study are all convicted felons incarcerated in the juvenile justice system. Thus, it is likely that these youth demonstrated behaviors (e.g., violent or aggressive behaviors) that are consistent with traditional masculine norms that resulted in their incarceration. The United States Juvenile Justice system has recently taken a strengths-based approach to focus on positive youth development instead of the traditional deficits approach. Therefore, the study's finding that participation in a strength-based program had an effect on changes in level of adherence to traditional masculinity that is associated with problem behaviors provides some evidence that this type of programming may be effective in this context.” *Mary Elisabeth Gray*

### **Other study findings of interest (independent of The Council programming):**

- **Ethnic Pride and Traditional Masculinity Beliefs**  
African American youth participants with greater levels of ethnic pride reported lower levels of adherence to traditional masculine ideology.
- **Age and Traditional Masculinity Beliefs**  
Younger youth showed higher levels of traditional masculine ideology at baseline than older youth.

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<sup>1</sup> Gray, Mary Elisabeth, “Man Up”: A Longitudinal Evaluation of Adherence to Traditional Masculinity among Racially/Ethnically Diverse Adolescent Inmates. (Ph.D. Dissertation, successfully defended, 2012, Portland State University, Portland, OR)

<sup>2</sup>Levant, R. F., Richmond, K., Majors, R. G., Inclan, J. E., Rosello, J. M., Heesacker, M., ... Seilers, A. “A multicultural investigation of masculinity ideology and alexithymia.” *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 4(2), (2003), 91-99.