

Discussion Leader Cover Letter

CSE 60876 | Research Methods | Prof. Tim Weninger

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Paper: Weaver, J. R., Vandello, J. A., & Bosson, J. K. (2013). *Intrepid, imprudent, or impetuous? The effects of gender threats on men's financial decisions.* *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 14(2), 184–191.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027087>

General Topic

The intersection of gender identity threat and financial decision-making. The paper investigates how situational challenges to masculine identity influence men's risk tolerance and temporal discounting in monetary contexts, connecting social psychology to behavioral finance.

Specific Behavior/Activity Studied (Two financial behaviors)

- Experiment 1: Bet sizing in a probabilistic gambling game.
 - Experiment 2: Preference for immediate, smaller monetary payoffs over delayed, larger payoffs.
- Both serve as operationalizations of financial risk-taking and impulsive fiscal decision-making.

Research Questions

The authors frame the inquiry around precarious manhood theory. The central claim is “*that men adopt an impulsive, risky mindset as a way to demonstrate or reaffirm their manhood status, particularly when it is under threat*”. This yields two testable hypotheses: **(H1)** gender-threatened men will place higher bets than gender-affirmed men, and **(H2)** gender-threatened men will favor immediate over delayed financial rewards, but only when their decisions are made publicly.

The gap

Prior research established that men take more financial risks than women and linked risk-taking to biological factors (testosterone, cortisol) and socialization. However, research had not demonstrated that situational, identity-based threats could produce risky financial decisions experimentally. Can a momentary challenge to masculine identity causally shift financial behavior toward greater risk and impulsiveness?

Claims

Three primary claims emerge. First, masculinity threats cause men to increase financial risk-taking (larger bets). Second, masculinity threats cause men to discount future rewards in favor of immediate payoffs. Third, this impulsive compensation is moderated by public-ness, threatened men only shift toward immediate rewards when they believe others will observe their decisions, supporting the theory that manhood restoration is fundamentally social.

Evidence

Two between-subjects randomized controlled experiments with manipulation checks.

Experiment 1 (N = 38 men): hand lotion vs. power drill product test, followed by a 5-round gambling game with real monetary stakes (\$5 endowment).

Experiment 2 (N = 73 men): 2×2 design (gender threat × public/private), using a recall-difficulty manipulation (list 10 vs. 2 “real man” behaviors), followed by 7 binary choices between immediate-smaller vs. delayed-larger payoffs. Both experiments used deception, pilot-tested their manipulations, and excluded participants who detected the deception.

Statistical Analysis

Experiment 1 uses one-way ANOVAs comparing mean bets between conditions across individual rounds and cumulative averages. Key result: Bet 1 alone, $F(1,36) = 4.80$, $p = .035$, $d = 0.71$; average of Bets 1-2, $F(1,36) = 9.63$, $p = .004$, $d = 1.0$. Effect attenuated by Bet 5 ($p = .09$), suggesting the manipulation wore off.

Experiment 2 uses orthogonal contrast coding in simultaneous multiple regression, a planned comparison approach testing the specific pattern: threat/public vs. all other cells. First contrast significant for both DVs: percentage of immediate choices, $t(69) = 2.46$, $p = .016$, $d = 0.59$; average funds forfeited, $t(69) = 2.93$, $p = .005$, $d = 0.70$. Remaining contrasts non-significant ($ts < 0.34$), confirming the predicted “one cell vs. rest” pattern. Effect sizes range from medium ($d = 0.57$) to large ($d = 1.0$). Manipulation checks confirmed both threat procedures worked as intended.