

Does everyone really want to be a macho man?

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Traditional attitudes of masculinity, such as physical toughness and personal sacrifice, are valued in Mexican culture. A University of Missouri researcher found that Mexican-American men, as a group, are more likely to endorse traditional 'macho man' attitudes than European-American or black men. Certain factors influenced this attitude, including socioeconomic status (SES). The higher the SES, the greater the likelihood that Mexican-American men held tightly to traditional masculine roles, even at the expense of emotional pressure.

According to the study, Mexican-American men who embraced traditional 'macho man' beliefs were more engaged with traditional Mexican culture and often were the primary breadwinners for the family. There were no significant findings that age affected these attitudes.

Those men often believed that:

- They deserved respect from their immediate family
- Self-assurance in men is admirable
- It is essential for men to gain the respect of others

"Being raised in a culture with traditional male values, Mexican-American men learn to uphold these values," said Glenn Good, professor of educational, school and counseling psychology in the MU College of

Education. "Men learn that they must be tough, suck it up and not complain."

In Mexican culture, men often feel honor and pride when they are the protectors of their families. These traditional attitudes are influenced by the Catholic faith and the importance of family in the Mexican culture. Yet, embracing these traditional attitudes may lead to a greater risk for problems such as depression, substance abuse, violence and reluctance to seek psychological assistance.

"If Mexican-American men feel pressure to meet these traditional ideals of masculinity, it can hinder their ability to cope with emotions," said Lizette Ojeda, MU doctoral candidate in counseling psychology. "They may feel the need to be tough and will not ask for help when they need it."

Ojeda stresses the importance of providing a safe space for Mexican-American men to be themselves. When men do get the help they need, they can be receptive, she said.

Source: University of Missouri-Columbia

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