

Department of Arts and Sciences 2017 Research Grant Abstract

Masculine Honor and Men's and Women's Perceptions That Their Significant Others Confront Threat

The origins of the Masculine Honor ideology can be traced back to cultures of honor such as those found in herding societies (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994, 1996). These cultures of honor, such as those found in the southern United States, eventually spread to other regions, evolving into a set of rules and values dictating how a man must act to be perceived as honorable: Masculine Honor. Many of these rules and values determine what is considered appropriate behavior, with the most important being that a man needs to protect his family, property, significant other, and self from threats. Moreover, this protection must be done in a swift and decisive manner, often with violence, in order to deter future threats (Barnes et al., 2012; Cohen, Nisbett & Schwarz, 1996, Saucier et al., 2016). Previous research has shown that men who confront threat with violence are perceived more favorably by those higher in Masculine Honor Beliefs. Furthermore, when a man wins a fight, it serves to further enhance his reputation (O'Dea, Castro Bueno, & Saucier, 2017; O'Dea, Chalman, Castro Bueno, & Saucier, under review), warding off future threats. This current study extends this research by examining if men and women differ in their levels of endorsement concerning their significant other confronting threat with violence. Further still, this study explores whether the endorsement of Masculine Honor Beliefs and the choice to either confront threat or walk away moderates this effect. We hypothesized that participants' gender and endorsement of Masculine Honor Beliefs will interact with condition and participant sex predicting their perceptions of a significant other who either chooses to confront threat with violence, or walk away. More specifically, we predicted that women higher in Masculine Honor Beliefs will show a higher positive endorsement for a male significant other confronting threat with violence, and perceive a man who walks away more negatively. This will be in part due to that due to the Masculine Honor belief that it is a man's duty to protect. Likewise we hypothesized that men higher in Masculine Honor would show less of an endorsement of their significant other confronting threat, as men higher in Masculine Honor Beliefs will perceive this confrontation as something they should have done themselves and that failing to do so may in fact lessen their reputation as a protector. The results of our data collection and analysis generally did not support our hypotheses. Interestingly, both men and women higher in Masculine Honor Beliefs were shown to have a higher endorsement of physical confrontation to threat than individuals lower in masculine honor. However, only women higher in Masculine Honor Beliefs perceived male significant other who did not confront the threat more negatively than a male significant other who confronted the threat. The results of this study are novel in that while it has been shown that both men and women may possess Masculine Honor, our research suggests that both men and women reporting higher levels of Masculine Honor demonstrate higher positive perceptions of a significant other who chooses to confront threat. While this may be an indication that a greater endorsement of violence is a function of higher levels of Masculine Honor, a more encouraging

interpretation is that gender roles are evolving indicating a positive shift towards gender equality such that men may not always see the need to act as the protector.