

Men of Honor Don't Talk: The Relationship between Masculine Honor and Social Activism
against Criminal Organizations in Italy

Abstract

Criminal organizations have a strong influence on social, political and economic life in Italy and other parts of the world. Nonetheless, local populations display collective passivity against organized crime, a phenomenon known as omertà. Omertà is linked to the concepts of honor and masculinity. That is, in order to fit ideological constructions of manliness, individuals should display indifference toward illegal activities and should not collaborate with legal institutions. In two studies, we investigated the link between endorsement of a masculine honor ideology and collective action tendencies against criminal organizations (antimafia). Study 1 ($N = 121$) involved a Northern Italian sample, Study 2 ($N = 301$) involved a Southern Italian sample. Across studies, results showed that endorsement of masculine honor ideology was associated with lower willingness to engage in social activism against criminal organizations. This relationship was mediated by attitudes toward criminal organizations (Study 1 and 2) and, in line with the notion of omertà, by lower levels of collective motive and more anxiety about interacting with police (Study 2). Directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: masculine honor; criminal organizations; collective actions; omertà; mafia; antimafia

The fight against Mafia, the foremost problem to be solved in our beautiful and unfortunate land, was not to be merely a detached work of repression, but a cultural and moral movement that involved everyone, and especially the younger generation, who can most immediately feel the beauty of the fresh wind of freedom that makes one refuse the stench of moral compromise, indifference, contiguity and thus complicity.

Paolo Borsellino, Antimafia Judge (1992)

In many parts of the world, aggressiveness, strength and violence are embedded within male culture (Spierenburg, 1998; Vandello & Cohen, 2008). For example instance. Criminological-criminological evidence indicates that the majority of physically violent crimes are performed by men (Hall, 2002). Importantly/Notably, male violence may be assessed through the lens of ideological beliefs that define it as *honorable* (cf. Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012). Male violence may become acceptable, or even normative, when a man uses it to protect women and property, or himself and his reputation from verbal and physical threats (Vandello, Cohen, & Ransom, 2008). Research has demonstrated that concerns with honor and reputation play a fundamental role in explaining violence, especially in cultures that strongly emphasize those values (i.e., cultures of honor; e.g., Cohen & Nisbett, 1994).

Honor and violence are also features of Italian criminal organizations (COs). COs have significant influence in Italy, particularly in southern regions. Unlike other forms of gangs, COs are defined by their adherence to a set of honor-related practices. Their affiliates strictly abide by dictates of honor, reputation, and masculinity (Behan, 2009; Paoli, 2004). These are important and valued socio-cultural traits in Mediterranean Countries (Peristiany, 1966) - Italy (Helkama, et al., 2013) and Southern Italy in particular (Schneider & Schneider, 1976), where COs originated.

In this article, we extend research on honor, violence, and masculinity by considering the implications of endorsing a masculine honor ideology for social activism against COs. As implied by the famous antimafia judge Paolo Borsellino, collective action against mafia needs to take into account those cultural elements that may generate indifference and complicity with organized crime. This article presents two studies designed to test the relationships between endorsement of a masculine honor ideology and social activism against COs in Italy.

Honor and Masculine Honor

Definitions of honor highlight two aspects of the concept, reflected in the *bipartite theory of honor* (Pitt-Rivers, 1966; Rodriguez-Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2002; Stewart, 1994). One aspect of honor refers to virtues such as honesty and loyalty. The importance of these qualities is widely acknowledged across different cultures (Uskul, Cross, Sunbay, Gercek, Swing, & Ataca, 2012; Nisbet & Cohen, 1996). These qualities are considered intrinsic to individuals and refer to their internal sense of self-worth, and moral standing.

A second aspect of honor concerns matters of reputation and status. In this guise, honor means being able to defend one's reputation and prestige in the eyes of other people (Barnes, et al., 2012; Peristiany, 1966;). This aspect of honor is particularly salient in some cultures, including Mediterranean countries (Peristiany, 1966; Rodriguez-Mosquera, et al., 2002; J. Schneider, 1969; P. Schneider, 1969;), Southern regions of the United States (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997; Wyatt-Brown, 1982), and South America (Johnson & Lipsett-Rivera, 1998). In these cultures, labeled 'cultures of honor', one's reputation depends upon others' judgments. Individuals are thus expected to defend their social reputation and carefully manage their social image (Nisbett, 1993).

Importantly, this second aspect of honor is strongly gendered (Spierenburg, 1998). Female honor is linked to notions of sexual purity and chastity (e.g., Vandello & Cohen, 2008), whereas male honor stems from the ability to defend and provide for one's family, safeguarding a tough reputation, and showing intolerance of insults (Barnes, et al., 2012). Thus, under these circumstances, male violence and aggression may become normative and even prescriptive (Vandello et al., 2013).

Endorsement of this masculine honor ideology has important social consequences. For instance, within cultures of honor (e.g., Southern regions of the US), masculine honor ideology has been linked to an increase in risk-taking behaviors (Barnes, Brown, & Tamborski, 2012), to the presence of indicators related to violence in schools (i.e., carrying a weapon to school), and even to the prevalence of actual school-shootings (Brown, Osterman, & Barnes, 2009). In addition, individuals' endorsement of the masculine honor ideology has been shown to be related to greater support for brutality in response to national threats (Barnes et al., 2012, Study 1) and to proclivity to violence against women (Baldry, Pagliaro, & Porcaro, 2013; Vandello & Cohen, 2008), due to the perceived role of female chastity in sustaining a man's reputation.

Honor ideology is both a cultural-level and an individual-level variable (Helkama, et al., 2013; Rodriguez-Mosquera, et al., 2002). That is, although there are cross-cultural variations in the emphasis on specific aspects of the honor ideology, there are also differences among individuals' endorsement of honor ideology.

Masculine Honor and Organized Crime in the Italian Context

Masculine honor is important in the culture of Mediterranean countries (Peristiany, 1966), and Italian culture in particular (Helkama, et al., 2013). For instance, Hughes (2007) highlighted the historical, political, and social functions of dueling as means for Italian '*gentlemen*' to defend their honor and virility. Similarly, anthropological evidence from the

south of Italy illustrates the importance for men of defending their reputation, using violence if necessary, in order to safeguard their social position (P. Schneider, 1969; see also Allum, 2006 p.60-63; J. Schneider, 1986-). These examples are framed by a more general cultural setting in which manhood has a precarious and fragile status, which must be defended at high personal and social costs (Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008; Vandello & Cohen, 2008).

The cultural emphasis on masculine honor is amplified within COs in Italy. The link between honor, masculinity and criminal organizations is signaled by linguistic expressions. New affiliates who go through initiation rituals are '*made into men*' and can use the title of '*men of honor*' (e.g., Paoli, 2003). *Men of honor* gain their reputation by demonstrating their ability to defend their persona, property, and women through physical violence, aggression and rapid retaliation (Paoli, 2003, p. 74). Affiliates who lose others' respect or fail to prove their potency (e.g., by failing to commit a murder) are subjected to punishment or even death (Allum, 2006; Paoli, 2003).

COs have been conceptualized either as originating from the 'attitudes', embedded in the culture of honor of some southern Italian regions (e.g., Hess, 1973), or as a special form of economic enterprise (e.g., Gambetta, 1993). Drawing on both perspectives, Paoli (2004) argues that Italian COs share some traits typical of organizations, while also having a cultural dimension. According to Paoli (2004, p. 20), COs are 'independent government bodies that regulate the internal life of each associated family and that are clearly different from the authority structure of their members' biological families'. Moreover, COs are characterized by rituals and symbols aimed at increasing solidarity between members and among the population (Allum, 2006). Thus, Italian COs draw on local and pre-existing values and cultural codes to sustain their legitimization and existence, while at the same time structuring their activities in relation to organizational and economic standards.

Omertà

An important socio-cultural feature related to COs is the honor code of *omertà*, or *law of silence* (Paoli, 2003; p. 109). Omertà refers to the prescription of silence associated with being involved in, victims or mere observers of illegal activities. This is a very powerful rule both within COs (i.e., internal omertà), and in the broader society (external omertà) (Allum, 2006).

The concept of omertà is rooted in the ideology of masculine honor. The origins of the word omertà have been traced in the Sicilian *omu*, which derives from the Spanish *hombre*, both words meaning *man* (Hess, 1998, p. 109). This code has two salient dimensions. First, to display manliness, men are expected to be able to avenge offenses without the help of authorities and to avoid contact with police forces in every situation, also when they are victims of a crime (cf. Schneider & Schneider, 2003, pp. 83-84). Second, individuals must display indifference toward others' illegal activities (Allum, 2006). Those who collaborate with police, report a crime, or meddle in other people's business, lose value and respect from others and may even incur sanctions (see Paoli, 2003, p. 109).

The collective passivity about organized crime implied by the code of omertà may seem *prima facie* consistent with the ethos of *amoral familism* attributed to Southern Italian populations (Banfield, 1958). According to Banfield (1958, p. 83), Southern Italian people's behavior could be explained through the following law: 'maximize the material, short run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise'. As corollaries of this general code, individuals would display an inability to act collectively in their interests, a disregard for public affairs, and a profound distrust for institutional authorities. These elements would be the cause of the economic and social backwardness of the south of Italy, where COs originated.

The concept of ‘amoral familism’ has been subject to criticisms on many grounds (Bell, 1979; Hess, 1998). For instance, Bell (1979, p. 73) contends that Banfield formulated his theory too narrowly, for the use of the term ‘nuclear family’ is essentially alien to the style of life of Southern Italians. Banfield overlooked the fact that those populations are immersed in vaster and more complex systems of kinship, friendship, patronage, and other ritual relationships. Paradoxically, as Hess (1998, p. 38) puts it ‘mafia and banditry would not be possible’ if these bonds, and their importance, are not taken into account.

Most importantly, Banfield’s theorization betrays a profound claim of cultural determinism. According to this claim, the *amoral familism* of Southern Italians would be the *cause of their political and social behavior* (Schneider & Schneider, 1976; Silverman, 1968), and by extension of the omertà displayed against COs. In contrast to this idea, scholars have noticed that the code of omertà may be attributed to economic and social factors. Specifically, the presence of foreign occupants and their impact on the economic and social fabric of these territories might have instilled in local populations a sense of distance from legal and social institutions (Allum, 2006; Silverman, 1968).

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In a cultural context characterized by honor-related values, some groups (i.e., COs) may have exploited the resulting social vacuum to attain power and legitimacy through their emphatic adherence to the honor ideology (Schneider & Schneider, 2003). In other words, rather than stemming from culturally ‘innate’ passivity, omertà may be the consequence of an active struggle for social predominance.

Collective Action to Oppose Criminal Organizations

By definition, protest is a public act aimed at improving the situation of one’s own group. Moreover, social activism against COs is often aimed at focusing legal efforts on tackling the mafias (e.g., Jamieson, 2000). Social activism against COs is usually coordinated through ‘antimafia’ groups. These groups operate at different levels, including political,

legislative, judicial and civil society. Most importantly, these groups coordinate actions aimed at decreasing *omertà*. No empirical research to date has investigated what socio-psychological factors may represent a barrier for individuals to engage in social activism against COs.

In the Italian context, collective participation against COs and pursuit of legal claims constitute a clear departure from the requirements of *omertà*. In a wider sense, and due to the strong link between *omertà* and masculine honor, collective participation against COs may be framed as a departure from the masculine honor ideology. Thus, we contend, endorsement of masculine honor is likely to be associated with lowered intentions to act collectively against criminal organizations.

Study 1

Although COs originated primarily in Southern Italian regions (Paoli, 2003), they now operate across the whole of Italy (Varese, 2011), partly because of the practice of ‘forced resettlement’ whereby COs’ members were banished from Southern Italy and forced to other Italian regions. The rationale was that, by being deprived of reputation, *mafiosi* would cease to engage in criminal activities. In reality, however, this practice has spread mafia-type activities to the North of Italy. Thus, we expect to find evidence in this context that a strong endorsement of masculine honor ideology will be associated with lower intentions to oppose COs through collective actions.

We also test a potential explanatory mechanism for this relationship. COs draw their legitimization from the cultural codes related to the ideology of masculine honor (Allum, 2006). Affiliates to criminal organizations carefully cultivate a reputation for being able to outwit the state and not letting others ‘push them around’. For instance, through exemplary killings, *mafiosi* reinforce the idea that they possess the capacity and strength to not let an offense go unpunished (e.g., Schneider & Schneider, 2003), a value historically prominent in

cultures of honor (Bowman, 2006). In addition, their ability for revenge is accompanied by reciprocity for favors, with *mafiosi* very keen on establishing *quid pro quo* relationships and, in some cases, providing jobs and opportunities for the local population (cf. Leung & Cohen, 2011).

~~This~~In brief, COs actively amplify values related to the ideology of masculine honor, in order to legitimize their activities and demands (Schneider & Schneider, 1976, p. 193). It follows that those who endorse a masculine honor ideology may simultaneously hold more positive attitudes toward COs. This may explain why they show lower intentions to engage in collective actions against these groups. We test this proposition in the present study.

In this study, we also included measures of regional identification, system justification motives (e.g., Kay & Jost, 2003), and the perceived risk associated with social activism against COs.

Italy has a long history of accentuated regional differences (cf. Dematteo, 2007). Therefore, we explored the relation between the extent to which participants value their regional identity and their degree of endorsement of the masculine honor ideology. On the one hand, only southern Italian regions have more clearly been identified as cultures of honor (cf. Schneider & Schneider, 2003). On the other, evidence suggests that individuals in the North of Italy associate similar meanings to honor as other Mediterranean areas (Helkama, et al., 2013). Therefore, we cannot provide a directional hypothesis concerning the relation between regional identity and masculine honor in the North of Italy.

We measured system justification motives, and perceived risk associated with activism against COs, in order to control for other possible constructs that could explain passivity toward COs. Rationalization of the national status-quo may imply a perception that there is little threat from COs, and this might represent an alternative ideological belief that could explain individuals' disengagement from collective actions against COs. Finally, due to

COs' violence against those who break the rule of omertà (e.g., Paoli, 2003), it is plausible that the personal risks arising from collective action inhibit action intentions.

Method

Participants and Procedure

One hundred and forty psychology students from a large university in the North East of Italy completed a questionnaire anonymously and voluntarily during a mass testing session. Participants were asked their region of provenience and the city/town in which they had lived for most of their life. Those who indicated a southern region/city ($N = 19$) were excluded from the current analyses. The remaining sample was of $N = 121$ participants (34 males, 1 unreported; $M_{age} = 20.42$, $SD = 0.45$). Of these 68.6% were from Veneto, 11.6% ~~from~~ Lombardy, 6.6% Trentino Alto Adige, 0.8% Piedmont, 4.1% Friuli Venezia Giulia, 6.6% Emilia Romagna, and 1.7% Tuscany.

Measures

Questionnaires were in Italian. The Honor Ideology for Manhood Scale (HIM; Barnes et al., 2012) and the System Justification Scale (SJS) were translated, adapted to the Italian context and back-translated. Throughout the questionnaire, criminal organizations were indicated with the word *mafie*¹ (plural for mafia). Items were measured on a 1 (*Not at All*) to 7 (*Completely*) scale. For each construct a mean score was computed by averaging responses to the relevant items.

Regional Identification. Regional identification was measured using three items (I am pleased to think of myself as a member of my region; I am glad I am a member of my region; I identify with other members of my region), which formed an internally reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$).

¹ Criminal organizations are named differently according to their region of provenience (Camorra in Campania, Mafia in Sicily, and 'Ndrangheta in Calabria). However, the label of *mafie* is generally used to indicate all the different organizations.

Honor Ideology for Manhood (HIM). HIM (Barnes et al., 2012) includes eight items tapping endorsement of males' physical aggression and violence in defense of one's own persona, women and propriety (e.g., 'A man has the right to act with physical aggression toward another man who steals from him'), and eight items tapping perception of qualities that should define a 'real man' (e.g., 'A real man will never back down from a fight'). Item 2, 8 and 14 from the original scale ('A real man doesn't let other people push him around', 'A real man can "pull himself up by his bootstraps" when the going gets tough', and 'A real man doesn't take any crap from anybody') were slightly modified to convey similar meanings in the language of the participants (the words '*prepotenza*', 'lift oneself up', and 'offense' were used respectively). The items showed good internal reliability ($\alpha = .89$).²

System Justification Scale (SJS). Perception of the legitimacy of the social system was measured using Kay and Jost's (2003) eight-item scale. Sample items are 'In general, you find Italian society to be fair', 'Italian society needs to be radically restructured' (reversed items). The items were averaged together ($\alpha = .68$).

Attitudes toward Criminal Organizations. We measured participants' attitude toward Criminal Organizations by asking to what extent they agreed with the following statements 'Some aspects of mafia activity are legitimate' and 'Some actions of mafias may have positive direct or indirect consequences for the area where you live' ($\alpha = .86$).

Collective Action Intentions. Intention to engage in collective actions was measured with four items. The items represented different levels of involvement in antimafia activities (signing a petition, participating in a demonstration, becoming part of an association against

² To check the proprieties of the translated HIM scale in the Italian context, we used procedures previously adopted by Barnes et al., (2012). Specifically, we conducted a factor analyses using principal axis as method of extraction. Closely replicating previous results, in both studies we obtained one primary (explaining about 40 % of variance) and two lesser factors (explaining respectively 12% and 5% of variance in Study 1, and 8% and 4% of variance in Study 2). Across studies, all the items loaded on the first factor (median unrotated factor loading of .63, range 32-80 in Study 1, and .64, range .27-75 in Study 2)

criminal organizations, and convincing other people to become part of an association against criminal organizations ($\alpha = .87$).

Perceived Risk. We asked participants to rate to what extent engaging in each of the previous activities could represent a personal risk for them (four items; $\alpha = .88$).

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among variables are presented in Table I. Notably, the correlation between regional identification and HIM was not significant, suggesting that the two constructs are not related in this Northern Italian sample. SJS was significantly correlated with attitudes toward criminal organizations, but not with HIM, or collective action intentions. Interestingly, the more strongly individuals justified the status quo the more positive was their attitude toward COs. This seems consistent with a tendency to rationalize the current state of affairs in Italy (cf. Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

Mediation Model

As predicted, HIM and collective action intentions were significantly and negatively related (see Table I). To test whether the negative effect of HIM on collective action intentions was explained by more positive attitudes toward criminal organizations, we used Preacher and Hayes' (2008) *Indirect* macro, with 5000 bootstraps. SJS was entered as a covariate in the model. The model was significant, $R^2 = .10$, $F(3, 117) = 4.03$, $p = .01$ (Figure 1).

HIM significantly predicted attitudes toward COs, $\beta = .23$, $SE = .09$, $t(121) = 2.61$, $p = .01$. The total effect of HIM on collective action intentions was also significant, $\beta = -.21$, $SE = .09$, $t(121) = -2.37$, $p = .02$. Attitudes toward COs (the mediator) significantly affected collective action intentions, $\beta = -.21$, $SE = .09$, $t(121) = -2.30$, $p = .02$. The effect of HIM on the collective action intentions was marginally significant after controlling for the mediator, β

= -.16, $SE = .09$, $t(121) = -1.81$, $p = .07$. Finally, the test of the indirect effect was significant, $\beta = -.05$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI = -.13 to -.01.

This study provided preliminary evidence of a link between endorsement of masculine honor ideology and collective action intentions against criminal organizations. In particular, individuals who endorsed a masculine honor ideology were less likely to express the intention to participate in collective actions against criminal organizations. This linkage was partially explained by more positive attitudes toward criminal organizations' activities, even when perceived fairness of the system was taken into account.

This study had some limitations. The sample used was mainly composed of female university students. Although women play an important role in transmitting cultural values (including values related to masculinity; e.g., see Barnes et al., 2012), testing our hypotheses in a more gender-balanced sample may strengthen confidence in our findings. We address this point in Study 2.

Moreover, the path between HIM and collective action intentions remained marginally significant ($p = .07$) also when the effect of the mediator (attitudes toward COs) was taken into account. It is likely that other omitted variables play a role in mediating the effect of HIM on collective action intentions (e.g., Zhao, Lynch Jr, & Chen, 2010). In Study 2 we address this point by exploring other constructs implied by the notion of omertà.

Study 2

Study 2 had three objectives. First, we aimed to replicate results of Study 1 in the south of Italy, where criminal organizations have originated and are more active. Second, to strengthen confidence in our findings, we aimed to replicate results from Study 1 in a larger and more gender-balanced sample. Third, we investigated the role of other possible constructs implied in the notion of omertà, namely anxiety toward authority (operationalized

as perceived anxiety in interaction with police; Eller, Abrams, Viki, Imara, & Peerbux, 2007) and perception of collective motive (Klandermans, 1984).

Omertà dictates that, to fit with ideological beliefs of manliness, individuals should not collaborate or enter in contact with law enforcement agencies, when they observe or even when they are victims of a crime. Indeed, sociologists have documented the general climate of mistrust surrounding police and authorities in southern Italy (Allum, 2006; Behan, 1996; 2009).

In cultures of honor, public-police relations may be influenced by conceptions of masculinity (Bowman, 2006, p. 67). For instance, appealing to the police may be interpreted as lacking the necessary vigor for self-protection (Cohen & Nisbet, 1996), and thus as a sign of loss of social presence (Allum, 2006). Moreover, when levels of trust in law enforcement agencies are low (Behan, 1996), public-police relationships might be conflictual (i.e., us against them). When the police are perceived as a distinct outgroup, those who enter in contact with police may incur a reputation for disloyalty.

Some findings are consistent with the idea that contact with the police may contravene shared norms (Eller et al., 2007; Viki, Culmer, Eller, & Abrams, 2006). Eller et al. (2007) showed, in a different context, that an important norm in some masculine honor cultures may be negative attitudes toward, and low contact with authorities, such as the police. In addition, Viki et al. (2006) demonstrated that individuals who perceive relations with police more negatively are less willing to cooperate and report a crime. An important indicator of inhibition of contact among groups is increased anxiety (e.g., Stephan & Stephan, 1985). That is, individuals may anticipate aversive psychological reactions at the idea of contact with exponents of the outgroup. In line with the notion of omertà, which prescribes distance from law-enforcement agencies, we contend that those who endorse a masculine

honor ideology more strongly may perceive contact with police as more threatening. This might explain part of the effect of HIM on intentions to opposed COs collectively.

The second element pertaining to the notion of omertà is that ‘to be a man’ one must display passivity and indifference for others’ illegal activities. This implies that those who endorse a masculine honor ideology may pose less value in the collective goal of a mobilization against COs. We operationalize this element as ‘collective motive’ (Klandermans, 1984).

Participation in collective actions is the result of different motives, such as motives pertaining to the goal of the collective participation (collective motive), and motives pertaining to the social and material cost-benefit calculation (social and reward motives respectively) (Klandermans, 1984; Sturmer & Simon, 2009). Since our interest lies in operationalizing and testing the elements primarily pertaining to the code of omertà, in this paper we focus on how individuals who endorse a masculine honor ideology perceive the collective motive of a mobilization against COs.

The collective motive is defined as the multiplicative function of the extent to which individuals expect to achieve their goals through collective actions (expectancy), and its subjective importance (value). Theoretically, it is the interactions between the value and expectation components that predicts mobilization (Klandermans, 1984; see Feather, 1982). A highly valued goal might not be sufficient to motivate action, if individuals do not hold positive expectations about their capacity of achieving the goal.

Due to the legitimization that COs draw by abiding to and emphasizing values associated with masculinity and honor, individuals who highly endorse a masculine honor ideology may perceive the goal of a collective mobilization against them as less valuable. In addition, individuals may expect similar norms to be shared by those around them and thus hold lower expectations concerning the ability of achieving the goal through joint action (see

Vandello, Cohen, et al., 2008). If this reasoning is correct, high levels of HIM should be associated with lower levels of collective motive. In turn, this should mediate the negative effect of HIM on collective action intentions.

System justification beliefs were neither associated with collective action intentions in Study 1, nor with HIM. Previous studies have found a co-variation between political conservatism and endorsement of the masculine honor ideology (e.g., Barnes et al., 2012). Therefore, we substituted this measure with a more general item measuring political conservatism in order to control for its impact on collective action intentions against COs. However, due to the stronger presence of the COs in the southern regions, we retained the measure of perceived risk. We also retained the measure of regional identity, given that it may have greater implications for endorsement of masculine honor in the South of Italy (P. Schneider, 1969).

Method

Participants and Procedure

Three hundred and fourteen participants from a high school in a southern Italian region (Campania) took part in this research (152 males, 8 unreported; $M_{age} = 17.50$, $SD = 1.50$). This particular school was chosen because it was located in one of the areas with the highest density of criminal organizations (named 'Camorra' in this region). All participants reported that they were from Campania. Participants participated voluntarily in the research. Data were collected in school classrooms over three days with the aid of a research assistant. After all classrooms had completed the questionnaire, debriefing sessions were held and included discussions about the possible antecedents and consequences of criminal organizations in Italy.

Measures

The measures were the same as in Study 1, except SJS was dropped and we included some new measures. Criminal organizations were referred to as *Camorra* (the local mafia) within the questionnaire. Responses were generally measured using a 1 (*Not at All*) to 7 (*Completely*) scale.

Regional Identification. As in Study 1 we used three items to measure how participants' valued their identification with the region ($\alpha = .77$).

Honor Ideology for Manhood (HIM). The HIM scale was used as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .91$).

Anxiety about Interacting with Police. We measured to what extent participants would feel comfortable (reversed item), threatened, and anxious about interacting with police. The scale was at the limit of acceptability in terms of internal consistency ($\alpha = .62$). However, in exploratory research values of Cronbach's alpha below .70 may be deemed acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). It should be also noted that, in some instances, when there is a small number of items, Cronbach's alpha may underestimate reliability (cf. Hair et al., 2010). In addition, a principal component analysis revealed only one factor explaining 57% of the variance. On the basis of these observations, we decided to retain this scale.

Quantity of Contact with the Police. Previous research has demonstrated that quantity of contact with the police may affect attitudes toward the police ~~in the UK~~ (Eller, et al., 2007). Following Eller et al., we used two items measuring the amount of contact with police in daily life (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very Often*) and frequency of contact (1-4 times a year, once or twice a month, once a week, daily). The two items were standardized and averaged together ($\alpha = .71$).

Attitudes toward Camorra. We measured participants' attitude toward Camorra using the same two items used in Study 1 ($\alpha = .71$).

Collective Motive. Following previous research (e.g., Sturmer & Simon, 2009), we measured the value and expectancy components of the collective motive separately. Participants rated

the importance they attached to defeating Camorra ($1 = \text{Not at All Important}$, $7 = \text{Completely Important}$) and to what extent they expected this could be achieved through the joint action of the people living in the area ($1 = \text{Under No Circumstances}$, $7 = \text{Certainly}$). Theoretically, the value and expectancy elements interact to predict collective actions. Thus, in line with previous research, we combined the two scores multiplicatively for each participant (scores ranging from 1 to 49) (see Klandermans, 1984).

Collective Action Intentions. Intentions to engage in collective actions were measured with the same four items used in Study 1 ($\alpha = .90$).

Perceived Risk. Perceived risk was measured using the same four items as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .87$).

Political Orientation. We asked participants to indicate their political orientation on a scale from 1 (*Extreme Right*) to 7 (*Extreme Left*).

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses

Correlations, means and standard deviations for the variable are summarized in Table II. Regional identity was significantly correlated with HIM. Consistent with anthropological work on honor in the southern Italian regions (Schneider & Schneider, 1976), individuals who valued their membership as part of their region also endorsed the ideology of masculine honor more strongly.

Correlations also showed that men endorsed the masculine honor ideology more strongly than women but had less willingness to engage in collective actions and more positive attitudes toward camorra than did women. These differences are likely attributable to differences in endorsement of the masculine honor ideology. Indeed, regression analyses revealed that once the effect of HIM is partialled out, sex is not significantly related to collective action tendencies ($\beta = .09$, $p > .10$) or to attitudes toward criminal organization, (β

= .005, $p > .10$). In contrast, the relationship between HIM and collective action tendencies ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$) remained highly significant when controlling for age, sex and perceived risk ($\beta s < .09, p s > .15$). Thus, in the following analyses we collapsed across gender.

Path Model

We tested the model including the new measures in Study 2. Because regional identification was related to the endorsement of the masculine honor ideology, and because anthropological work has shown that masculine honor is an important element of southern Italian culture (e.g., Schneider & Schneider, 2003), we added regional identification as a predictor of masculine honor ideology. Quantity of contact with police and perceived risk were added as controls for intergroup anxiety about interacting with police and collective action intentions, respectively.³

As recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008, p. 882), residuals of the mediators were allowed to covary. It is unlikely that covariance among the mediators is completely explained by their mutual correlation with HIM. Modelling covariation among mediators' residuals allows us to take into account variance which may be explained by additional and omitted variables. In order to test this model, we used the path model approach and AMOS 20.0. Due to missing data on one or more variables, the final sample size was reduced to $N = 301$.

The model fit the data very well. Chi-square was non-significant, despite the large sample size $\chi^2(16, N = 301) = 14.97, p = .52$. The other indices also indicated a very well fitting model, with the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .99, adjusted-GFI (AGFI) = .98, comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.00, root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < .001 (cf. Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008).

³ Concerning our measure of quantity of contact, it should be noted that the use of an ordinal scale may violate path analysis' assumption of equal intervals in measurement. This is clearly a limitation of the present model. However, under some circumstances, this violation may have less severe consequences, particularly when the variable is used as a predictor rather than a criterion (see Boyle, 1970).

A simplified version of the model is presented in Figure II. HIM was significantly predicted by identification with the region, $\beta = .31$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$. HIM significantly predicted intergroup anxiety about interacting with police, $\beta = .20$, $SE = .07$, $p = .002$, collective motive, $\beta = -.18$, $SE = .64$, $p = .002$, and attitudes toward COs, $\beta = .49$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$. Collective action tendencies was significantly predicted by anxiety about interacting with police, $\beta = -.10$, $SE = .05$, $p = .03$, attitudes toward COs, $\beta = -.27$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, and collective motive, $\beta = .50$, $SE = .005$, $p < .001$.

An inspection of the modification indices revealed no necessary modifications for improving the fit of the model. Consistent with the full mediation model, adding a direct path from HIM to collective action tendencies did not significantly improve the model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 14.97 - 12.59 = 2.38$; $DF = 16 - 15 = 1$; $p = .12$) and the path was non-significant, $\beta = -.09$, $SE = .07$, $p = .09$. Thus, we retained the simpler model (full mediation model).

We then proceeded to test the significance of the indirect effect of HIM on collective action intentions through the three mediators, using 5000 bootstraps. The total indirect effect was significant, $\beta = -.30$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = $-.42$ to $-.19$. In addition, all the three individual indirect paths were significant (anxiety about interacting with the police, $\beta = -.02$, $SE = .013$, 95% CI = $-.056$ to $-.003$, attitudes toward COs, $\beta = -.167$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI = $-.25$ to $-.095$, and collective motive, $\beta = -.11$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI = $-.198$ to $-.036$).

As a test of the relative weight of each indirect effect, we computed pairwise contrasts between the paths (cf. Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The contrast between the indirect effects of attitudes toward COs and collective motive was not significant, $\Delta\beta = -.056$, $SE = .056$, 95% CI = $-.056$ to $.16$, indicating that the two paths did not differ significantly in magnitude. Both however were significantly different from anxiety about interacting with police, $\Delta\beta = -.145$, $SE = .044$, 95% CI = $.07$ to $.24$, and $\Delta\beta = -.09$, $SE = .043$, 95% CI = $.01$ to $.18$,

respectively, suggesting that anxiety about interacting with the police accounted for less variance in the dependent variable.⁴

General Discussion

In this article we presented two studies investigating the effect of endorsement of the masculine honor ideology on collective action tendencies against criminal organizations. Drawing on theories of male honor (Barnes et al., 2012) and on organized crime and omertà (Schneider & Schneider, 2003), we predicted that endorsement of a masculine honor ideology should be related to lower tendencies to engage in collective actions against COs. Across two samples ($N = 121$ and $N = 301$, respectively), and two different Italian geographical areas, results provided evidence in support of our hypothesis.

Study 1 provided preliminary evidence that the effect of masculine honor on collective action tendencies was explained by more positive attitudes toward COs. Specifically, those who endorsed a masculine ideology expressed more positive attitude toward organized crime. In turn, this attitude mediated the relation between HIM and collective action tendencies. These results are consistent with previous research, which show that endorsement of a masculine honor ideology at the individual level may have an impact at the collective level (e.g., Barnes et al., 2012).

It is important to highlight some limitations pertaining to the demographic characteristics of the sample used in Study 1. This study used a sample of (mostly) female

⁴ Table II showed significant correlations between HIM and gender, political orientation, and age. To ensure the statistical generalizability of our model across these different groups, we fitted our model using a Multigroup approach, constraining the parameters to be equal across groups. Specifically, we fitted the model by gender (females [$N = 149$] and males [$N = 146$]), by individuals who differed in political orientation (conservative [answered less than 4, $N = 116$], liberal [more than 4, $N = 69$], and neutral [answered 4 or did not report any political orientation, $N = 116$]), and used school year as a proxy for age (third, $N = 105$, $M = 16.68$, $SD = 1.13$, fourth, $N = 109$, $M = 17.53$, $SD = 0.63$, and fifth school-year, $N = 87$, $M = 18.47$, $SD = 0.73$). The model always fitted the data well, $\chi^2(32, N = 295) = 39.69$, $p = .17$, GFI = .97, AGFI = .93, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .029; $\chi^2(48, N = 301) = 52.65$, $p = .29$; GFI = .96; AGFI = .91; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .018; $\chi^2(48, N = 301) = 56.71$, $p = .18$; GFI = .96; AGFI = .91; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .02, respectively. Moreover, additional models were tested which altered-varied the role of HIM and regional identification, and-or HIM and attitudes toward COs as IV-predictor and mediator/criterion. These tests revealed that the original model fits the data better than those alternative models ($\chi^2(16, N = 301) = 60.34$, $p < .001$; GFI = .93; AGFI = .89; CFI = .85; RMSEA = .10, and $\chi^2(16, N = 301) = 94.74$, $p < .001$; GFI = .93; AGFI = .84; CFI = .74; RMSEA = .13, respectively).

university students from the North of Italy. These characteristics may have limited our capacity to find any significant relationship between the variables. Indeed, well-educated, female students may be less inclined to endorse a masculine honor ideology and perhaps less likely to express positive attitudes toward criminal organizations. Nonetheless, our finding is consistent with evidence that criminal organizations have established themselves across the whole of Italy, including the north ([Varese, 2011](#)). Moreover, although women may endorse a masculine ideology to a lesser extent than men, they still play an important part in the socialization of cultural codes, and may endorse ideological beliefs that commend male violence in some circumstances (Vandello et al., 2009; Wyatt-Brown, 1982).

Study 1 showed that masculine honor was not linked to SJS. The latter variable was however positively correlated with attitudes toward COs. This suggests that those who tend to rationalize the status quo might, in a cultural context that endorses COs, also view the criminal activity of certain groups as more legitimate. Future research is needed to investigate the relationship between system justification beliefs and attitude toward criminal organizations' activities in Italy and in other types of culture and political systems.

Study 2 was designed to replicate, extend, and address some of the limitations of Study 1. Study 2 tested the relationship between masculine honor in a southern Italian region, in a larger and gender-balanced sample. In addition, Study 2 introduced measures tapping the cultural construct of omertà. Study 2 showed that the link between endorsement of a masculine honor ideology and collective action ~~tendencies~~-intentions was mediated by attitudes toward criminal organizations (replicating results from Study 1), reduced collective motive (an operationalization of indifference; cf. Klandermans, 1984) and more perceived anxiety about interacting with police (cf. Eller et al., 2007).

The relation between HIM and regional identification is another interesting feature of these studies. Study 2 showed that the ideology of masculine honor was predicted by how

much participants valued their regional identity as *Campani*. In contrast, the absence of this correlation in Study 1 suggests that this attribute is not related to a northern Italian regional identity. It should be noted that the two samples differ demographically, and we are not in position to draw firm conclusions about this difference across studies. Nonetheless, these results are consistent with anthropological and psychological observations that describe the south of Italy as a more typical culture of honor, while identifying the north as more individualistic culture (Semin & Rubini, 1990). Future research should directly compare the two contexts and disambiguate this point.

Notably, across the two studies, perceived risk did not affect collective action intentions. Omertà is sometimes associated with fear, due to COs' use of violence in dealing with those who break this rule. Yet, our results suggest that, at least in the case of collective actions, omertà has more to do with endorsement of the masculine honor ideology than personal perception of risk. However, we believe that perceived risk may have a different impact in other segments of the population. Although we retained risk as covariate in the model, future research should test the effect of perceived [danger-risk](#) in other groups of the population (e.g., adults) and different contexts.

Limitations and Future Directions

Due to the fact that no prior psychological research has investigated social activism against COs, the model presented in Study 2 should be considered as a promising point of reference. Future research could test its generalizability to different sections of the population and different cultural contexts. Moreover, no definitive causal claims may be made from the correlational design. Some of the paths hypothesized and tested in these studies could be confirmed by directly manipulating the variables. For instance, future research may attempt to prime the concept of honor and test its effect on collective action tendencies against COs.

This research is affected by some limitations. In both studies we measured attitudes toward COs using two items, tapping the perceived legitimacy of COs' actions and the perceived consequences of their actions for the territory. In keeping with our theorization of omertà, these represent two important dimensions relatively to the perception of COs. Admittedly, however, more numerous and perhaps direct items would have provided a more effective way to assess individuals' perception of criminal organizations. It should be noted that given the social, legal, and cultural (i.e., secrecy) aspects related to COs, these items may be particularly prone to a social desirability bias, also when anonymous, self-administered questionnaires are used (cf. Nederhof, 1985). A challenge for future research consists in designing scales tapping attitudes toward COs, while at the same time elaborating methods for avoiding desirability bias in participants.

In Study 2, we operationalized non-collaboration with law enforcement agencies as perceived anxiety in public-police intergroup contact (e.g., Eller, et al., 2007). Due to the fact that in this cultural context, contact with the police may contravene norms of masculinity (e.g., self-protection), we predicted and found that endorsement of a masculine honor ideology is related to higher perceived threat about contact with police. This in turn partially mediated the relationship between HIM and collective action intentions. However, other important elements may be involved in this construct, including the objective unreliability of institutions in some southern regions of Italy (Allum, 2006), and the social consequences of dealing with police (i.e., a reputation for being a snitch). Future research should examine these and other factors implied in public-police relations, and assess their role in collective actions against COs.

In similar vein, a task for future research is to examine cost-benefit calculations implied in the intention to take action against organized crime (Klandermans, 1984). In this paper, we focused on how endorsement of a masculine honor ideology related to the

perceived goal of a collective mobilization, in order to tap the alleged passivity implied by the code of omertà. It is however likely that motives pertaining to social and material costs also weigh in the decision of whether or not take action. More empirical evidence is needed to understand their impact and association with endorsement of a masculine honor ideology.

Future research should also focus on examining moderators of the relationship between masculine honor ideology and collective action intentions against COs. Due to the fact that COs draw their legitimacy from honor related values, there might be circumstances in which the negative association between endorsement of a masculine honor ideology and collective action against COs might be attenuated or even reversed, as for instance when the adversarial nature of COs' actions for one's family is emphasized⁵. Indeed, Barnes et al. (2012) demonstrated that, when the enemy is perceived as external to the honor group (as in the case of terrorists; see Bowman, 2006), those who espouse values related to masculine honor are more (rather than less) prone to militant action.

This flexibility in the range of responses related to the endorsement of a masculine honor ideology might also explain the simultaneous covariation between HIM and political conservatism found in this study (see also Barnes et al., 2012), on the one side, and perceived threat in interaction with police, on the other. Specifically, while conservative politics may be associated to honor-related values, in a cultural setting in which the state is perceived as alien and external to the ingroup (Behan, 1996), public-police interactions may be perceived as threatening one's reputation (Bowman, 2006). This issue warrants further scrutiny.

Implications and Conclusions

These studies are the first to link the ideology of masculine honor to social activism against criminal organizations. They provide important new insights into the reasons why

⁵ We gladly acknowledge an anonymous reviewer's contribution to this point.

individuals do or do not engage in collective action against such organizations. In contrast to Banfield's (1958) concept of amoral familism, these studies suggest that COs' exploitation of ideological beliefs related to honor may be effective for creating consensus and lowering opposition.

These studies have implications for law enforcement and education. Recent findings indicated that educative interventions aimed at reducing honor-related attitudes might have beneficial effects on adolescents, and might contribute to reduce violence (Cihangir, 2013). Similarly, interventions targeted at questioning endorsement of masculine honor ideology might impact on individuals' acceptance of organized crime, and perhaps increase social activism. Alternatively, considering that COs' perceived legitimacy stems from their adherence to masculine honor values, challenging their claims of potency and control, or matching their interests against those of more significant 'honor groups' (e.g., the family; ~~see~~ Bowman, 2006) may turn out to be effective ways of decreasing their presence, and perhaps reduce omertà.

Future research is obviously needed to explore these implications. However, as Paolo Borsellino acutely noticed well before these studies were designed and conducted, antimafia-related actions should take into account moral attitudes that imply indifference to, and complicity with, criminal organizations.

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Table I.

Inter-correlations, means and standard deviations for variables in Study 1.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| <i>Regional Identification (1)</i> | - | | | | | | | |
| <i>HIM (2)</i> | .15 | - | | | | | | |
| <i>SJS (3)</i> | .23* | -.003 | - | | | | | |
| <i>Attitudes toward COs (4)</i> | .12 | .23** | .19* | - | | | | |
| <i>Collective Action Tendencies (5)</i> | -.02 | -.21* | .08 | -.22* | - | | | |
| <i>Perceived Risk (6)</i> | .16 | .13 | -.02 | .01 | -.08 | - | | |
| <i>Age (7)</i> | -.11 | -.06 | .17* | .02 | .01 | -.19* | - | |
| <i>Sex (8)</i> | .17 | -.07 | -.07 | .03 | -.063 | .19* | -.15 | - |
| <i>M</i> | 4.15 | 2.58 | 1.96 | 1.98 | 5.07 | 3.69 | 20.42 | - |
| <i>SD</i> | 1.36 | 0.93 | 0.64 | 1.32 | 1.43 | 1.47 | 1.80 | - |

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Sex: 1 = male, 2 = female.

Table II.

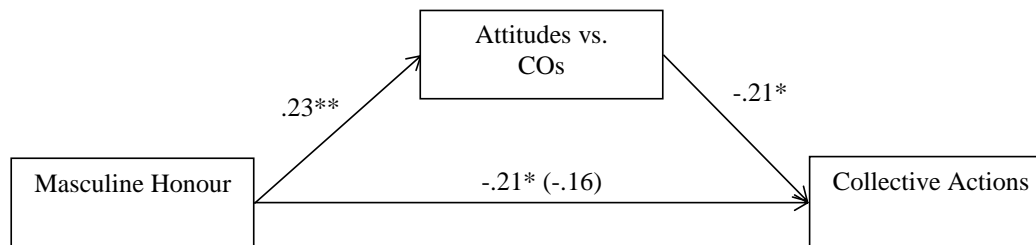
Inter-correlations, means and standard deviations for variables in Study 2.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------|-------|----|
| <i>Regional Identification (1)</i> | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>HIM (2)</i> | .32*** | - | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Anxiety Inter. Police (3)</i> | .03 | .16** | - | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Contact with Police (4)</i> | .04 | .11* | -.01 | - | | | | | | | |
| <i>Attitudes toward COs (5)</i> | .16** | .47*** | .15** | .07 | - | | | | | | |
| <i>Collective Motive (6)</i> | .01 | -.17** | -.17** | .01 | -.27*** | - | | | | | |
| <i>Collective Action Tendencies (7)</i> | -.04 | -.28*** | -.23*** | .02 | -.41*** | .58*** | - | | | | |
| <i>Perceived Risk (8)</i> | -.06 | .01 | -.02 | -.03 | -.01 | .08 | .07 | - | | | |
| <i>Political Orientation (9)</i> | -.11 | -.21*** | .01 | .05 | -.15* | .05 | .09 | .013 | - | | |
| <i>Age (10)</i> | -.07 | -.12* | -.001 | .01 | -.02 | -.02 | .02 | .04 | .02 | - | |
| <i>Sex (11)</i> | -.24*** | -.36*** | -.05 | -.11 | -.17** | .12* | .18*** | .15** | .09 | .05 | - |
| <i>M</i> | 4.87 | 4.06 | 3.33 | -0.07 | 2.36 | 29.36 | 5.07 | 4.75 | 3.60 | 17.50 | - |
| <i>SD</i> | 1.41 | 1.29 | 1.51 | 0.87 | 1.63 | 14.50 | 1.67 | 1.51 | 1.96 | 1.11 | - |

Note: * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. Sex: 1 = male, 2 = female. Contact with Police is standardised.

Figure 1.

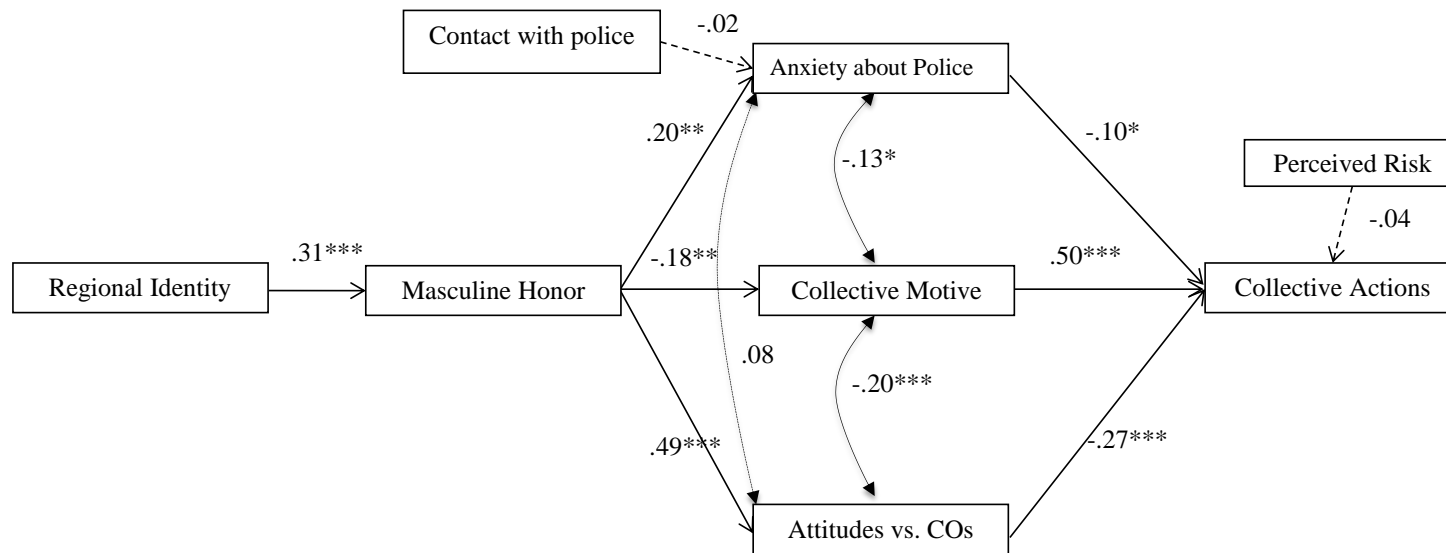
Study 1: Mediated model showing coefficients for the indirect effect of Endorsement of the Masculine Honour Ideology on Collective Action Tendencies via Perceived Legitimacy of the Criminal Organizations.



*Note: * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$. SJS is a covariate in the model. The Direct Effect is indicated in parentheses.*

Figure 2.

Study 2: Path model showing coefficient for the antecedents of masculine honour ideology and its consequences on collective action tendencies against Criminal Organizations.



Note: * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. Dashed lines are non significant paths.