In the eyes of others : the role of honor concerns in explaining and preventing insult-elicited aggression

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Contents

Chapter 1

General Introduction

"*Mine honor is my life, both grow in one*
Take honor from me, and my life is done"

William Shakespeare

The soccer world cup championships final of 2006 promised to be a memorable match for Zinedine Zidane, Europe's best soccer player ever, according to the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). The former Juventus and Real Madrid star, known for his highly technical and almost elegant style of play, had returned from retirement in the build-up to the tournament and was directly reinstated as captain of the French national team. He had helped France qualify for the tournament and get through to the final. He was also declared best player of the tournament. Zidane was expected by everyone to lead France to victory, win his second World Cup and restore his rank among the top players of the world, in what he had announced to be the final match of his career. All seemed to be going according to plan as he helped France gain a lead on Italy with a goal, though Italy scored an equalizer later in the game. However, things turned for the worse during extra time. In the 110th minute of the game, Zinedine Zidane was sent off by the referee with a red card because he fiercely head-butted Italian defender Marco Materazzi in the chest. After that, France lost the game to Italy during a penalty shootout. To date, soccer fans across the world remember the almost tragic TV-footage of Zinedine Zidane walking past the cup trophy as he made his way to the dressing room for the last time, symbolizing a tragic and disillusioned ending to an exceptional career.

Soon rumors spread about what had taken place between the two players and why Zidane had reacted in such a way at an important moment during such an important game. Based on later statements by both players, we now know that Materazzi was pulling his shirt in a challenge when Zidane remarked: "You can have my shirt after the game if you want it so badly." After which Materazzi hurled: "I'd rather have the whore that is your sister". This insult sent the French player from Algerian descent over the edge, resulting in the head-butt. He later stated that he was sorry that viewers had seen what he did, but that he did not regret doing it, for after all, he was a man. And regretting his action would mean agreeing with the insult.

Many people condemned Zidane's outburst, even after hearing about the immediate cause, saying that 'sticks and stones may break your bones but names will never hurt you'. Others, among which the Algerian president, were very sympathetic to him, not the least because Marco Materazzi was such a belligerent player. One of Zidane's main supporters was his mother, applauding her son for his fierce response. She stated that the family was sad her son had to end his career with a red card but at least he had his *honor*.

Relevant to this account is Zidane's Algerian cultural heritage. Anthropological research classifies cultures in the Mediterranean, such as in Algeria, as honor cultures (Gilmore, 1987; Peristiany, 1965; Schneider, 1969). Zidane responded in a way in accordance with the code of honor, an imperative moral guideline dictating how people should respond to offenses. His behavior may have seemed irrational to people unfamiliar with this code, because the loss he and his team sustained seemed in no way equal to the impact of a mere insult. However, in contexts that give rise to these norms, not responding in accordance with the code may have resulted in far more adverse consequences. As Zidane's mother noted "*Some things are bigger than soccer*".

In the past decades, honor cultures have also received attention in the field of social- and cultural psychology, particularly with respect to honor-culture members' vigorous response to offensive encounters. In the current dissertation, I build on this line of research. My main goal is to identify, from a social psychological perspective, how honor concerns influence self-perceptions and conflict development, why people concerned with honor tend to become angrier and respond more vigorously to insults, and whether or how these negative ramifications of offensive behavior can be prevented. With this knowledge I hope to contribute to both cross-cultural theory as well as the practice of intercultural conflict management.

In this first chapter, I will first provide a theoretical background for the research in this dissertation by setting forth a recently developed cultural framework that distinguishes different types of cultures based on so called

cultural *ideals*. The advantages of this framework over the traditional approaches to cultural differences will be discussed. Next, I will discuss previous research connecting the ideal of honor to insult-elicited aggression, highlighting current gaps in the literature. This discussion will set the stage for introducing my own research in this area, followed by a brief overview of the empirical chapters in this thesis.

Cultural ideals

Contact between members of different cultures has become commonplace in modern societies, be it as the result of political refuge, migration or contact over the World Wide Web. This increase in cultural diversity and intercultural contact can lead to positive outcomes regarding knowledge, acceptance, and cooperation among members of ethnically diverse groups. However, it can also be a source of misunderstanding, tension, and conflict. Hence, understanding cross-cultural similarities and differences has become an important topic in current psychological research.

Traditionally, the majority of research investigating cultural differences in social psychology has been based on seminal research on values by Hofstede and colleagues (Green, Deschamps, & Páez, 2005; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The distinction between individualistic and collectivistic cultures in particular has spawned a considerable body of literature in many different fields of research (Heine, 2007; Hoshino-Browne, et al., 2005; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007b; Markus & Kitayama, 2003). Individualistic cultures, usually present in Western societies such as the USA, Canada, and Europe promote autonomy, achievement, and independence of the individual. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures, usually present in the Far East such as China, Japan, and India promote interdependence, loyalty, and communality among individuals (Schwartz, 1994). The majority of research on cultural differences in conflict management and negotiation has also been based on this cultural framework (Brett, 2000; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Oetzel, et al., 2001; Triandis, 2000).

Although the individualism-collectivism distinction is informative, it tends to overlook a large group of cultures that are not positioned on the extreme ends of either of the two dimensions, such as in the Middle-East and the Mediterranean. Additionally, studies investigating cultures that do not clearly represent one of these two dimensions show results that cannot be readily understood from the dominant theoretical framework, provided by Hofstede and colleagues (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 1991). For example, Turkish participants — somewhat collectivistic — showed a preference for more direct and assertive styles of conflict management, compared to individualistic Canadian participants who were more complying and compromising (Cingöz-Ulu & Lalonde, 2007). These findings are surprising, as previous research has generally shown that individualists tend to engage in more forcing behavior because they pursue personal goals, while collectivists tend to engage in more obliging behavior because they pursue communal goals (Brett, 2000; Holt & DeVore, 2005). This example is only one demonstration of the limitations to the suitability of the individualism-collectivism in understanding cross-cultural differences.

An alternative theoretical framework that has recently gained more support among social psychologists distinguishes between different cultures based on so called cultural *logics*. These logics are informative because they weave together a "constellation of shared beliefs, values, behaviors, practices, and so on that are organized around a central theme" (Leung & Cohen, 2011, p. 2). Additionally, they take into account historic, economic, and contextual factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of these logics over time. The logics prescribe what constitutes an *ideal* prototype of each culture and reflect in what way the value of an individual is defined within that context. Below I will elaborate on three ideals identified by previous research: honor, dignity and face.

Honor

A first cultural logic is the ideal of *honor*. Based on anthropological research honor is defined as "the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society" (Pitt-Rivers, 1965, p. 21). Honor is considered a special form of collectivism that is characterized by a strong reliance on positive social evaluations as an important source of personal worth (Rodriguez Mosquera, Fischer, Manstead, & Zaalberg, 2008). In honor cultures, there is a strong emphasis on adhering to a social code of conduct in order to ensure positive evaluations. As honor relies on positive social evaluations, it can be lost or even taken away by others. Having honor not only gives entitlement to respect and precedence, but losing honor is associated with humiliation, degradation, or exclusion from the group (Gilmore, 1987; Peristiany, 1965). Therefore people are very concerned with being perceived by others as someone who is worthy of honor. In such cultures, honor is a person's claim to worth, but this worth can only be claimed effectively if it is conferred by others (Gilmore, 1987). The maintenance and protection of one's reputation plays an important part in this process (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). Accordingly, social interactions are regulated by the vigilant avoidance of shame (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Having a sense of shame is considered very important in such cultures because this emotion signals when an important moral or social standard has been transgressed (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008).

Research has shown that honor extends to different domains. A domain very central to honor in Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean cultures is family honor (Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2002b; Van Osch, Breugelmans, Zeelenberg, & Bölük, 2013). Family honor pertains to the good name and virtue of one's extended family and it reciprocally influences the extent to which people are valued and respected in society. Other domains, such as the male and female honor code prescribe gender-related norms. For example, in many honor cultures, it is important for male members to have a reputation of toughness and being someone not to be taken advantage of (Cohen, Nisbett,

Bowdle, & Schwarz, 1996; Schneider, 1969). Males are expected to protect themselves and their family, if necessary even by force. Female honor mainly relates to norms surrounding modesty and sexual shame. Finally, the domain of personal integrity contains norms that dictate trustworthiness, honesty, and social interdependence (Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2000; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b).

Honor cultures are believed to develop in areas with limited resources and beyond the protection of central law enforcement. In these areas — e.g., herding communities or inner city ghetto's — people are at high risk of being robbed from their livelihood and have to rely on vigilance and self-protection to ward off potential rivals. One way to do so is by having a reputation of toughness, or at least giving the impression that you are prepared to defend yourself at all costs (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Cohen, et al., 1996). Likewise, it is important to be seen as someone who is trustworthy and not about to take advantage of others, in order to prevent being perceived as a potential threat to others (Cohen, 2001; Schneider, 1969). Therefore, in such contexts, strict reciprocity norms dictate social exchanges. People from honor cultures go to great lengths to showcase their trustworthiness and pay back a good deed — i.e. a favor. They will also do whatever it takes to avenge a bad deed — i.e. an offense — even to an extent that might seem irrational to people who do not endorse honor norms (Leung & Cohen, 2011).

Honor cultures can be found in many countries around the world, predominantly in the Middle-East, the Mediterranean, Latin America, and the southern parts of the USA (Cohen, et al., 1996; Uskul, Cross, Sunbay, Gercek-Swing, & Ataca, 2012; Van Osch, et al., 2013). Although in many of these areas, the environmental factors prompting the development of such cultures have faded, standards instilled in institutions and socializing customs perpetuate the existence of honor norms (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997).

Dignity

Another cultural logic is provided by the ideal of *dignity*. Dignity is best described by the conviction that "each individual at birth possesses an intrinsic value at least theoretically equal to that of every other person" (Ayers, 1984, p. 19). Dignity thus revolves around the value of a person, inherent at birth and independent from the evaluations of others. People endorsing the ideal of dignity rely on internal evaluations to define their worth; they follow internally-defined moral norms to guide their behavior (Leung & Cohen, 2011). They are therefore less concerned about the impressions they leave on others, because getting other people's approval is not a major concern when one relies on internal evaluations as a source of self-worth. As Leung and Cohen indicate "A person with a sense of dignity is a sturdy person who will behave according to his or her own internal standards, rather than being driven by impulse or the whims of the situation" (2011, p. 3). Even if these moral standards are at odds with those of others. More so than shame, avoidance of an internal sense of guilt guides behavior in social interaction in dignity cultures, because it signals the transgression of internal moral standards.

Historically, dignity cultures are believed to have developed in cooperative farming communities backed up by an effective law-system (Leung & Cohen, 2011). In such contexts social exchange is often governed by short term tit-for-tit contracts. Positive reciprocity is an important norm in that respect — though not to the same extent as in honor cultures — because it signals trustworthiness and accountability. However, there is less reliance on negative reciprocity — i.e. paying back a bad deed — because transgressions of social norms are sanctioned through effective law enforcement. As such, people do not have to be self-reliant or to promote an image of toughness to uphold law and order (Cohen, et al., 1996; Uskul, et al., 2012).

Dignity is the dominant ideal endorsed in cultures originating in Western societies, such as Europe, Canada, and the (northern parts of) the USA and aligns with the syndrome of individualism in the traditional framework of

cultural values (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1994). Research has shown for example that Dutch people – dignity culture — value achievement and independence more and social interdependence less than people from Spain who endorse an honor culture (Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2002a). Additionally, people from the northern parts for the USA — dignity culture — endorse statements related to invulnerability of self-worth in the face of external evaluations to a greater extent than people from the southern parts of the USA and Hispanics — honor culture (Leung & Cohen, 2011).

Face

A third logic relates to the ideal of *face*. Similar to honor, the ideal of face revolves around the value of an individual in the eyes of others. However, it is different from honor in the sense that while honor is contested for in unstable and competitive contexts, consisting of rough equals, face develops in more or less stable hierarchies. A person's face is strongly tied to his/her standing within the larger societal hierarchy (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Consequently, face is not as easily challenged as honor.

Social evaluations also play an important role in face cultures. Accordingly, people are highly motivated to live up to social standards and avoid being shamed in social interaction, in order to prevent loss of face. However face is not lost or gained at the expense of others. People have face until they lose it, but others cannot take it away from them. In contrast to honor cultures, where successfully challenging another person's honor can increase one's own honor, challenging another person's face is likely to be considered a transgression itself and may lead to loss of face for the perpetrator. Moreover, violations of social norms are not sanctioned by the victim, but by superiors along hierarchical lines. Face aligns with the cultural syndrome of collectivism. Face cultures are usually found in the Far East, in countries such as China, Japan, and the Korea's (Leung & Cohen, 2011). This ideal is not relevant to the topic of this dissertation and therefore, I only discuss it briefly.

Cultural logics within the Dutch society

In this dissertation, I will mainly focus on the ideals of honor and dignity for two reasons. First, numbers from the Central Bureau for Statistics show that honor and dignity represent the two largest cultural groups in the Dutch society. As discussed before, the ideal of dignity is most prototypical for the Dutch culture and history. Moreover, in 2013, over 6% of the almost 17 million people in the Netherlands belonged to the largest ethnic groups associated with an honor culture, such as Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch (CBS, November 2013). At the same time, a lack of appreciation of the differences between people from these two different cultural backgrounds is often cited as an important source of conflict within the Dutch society (e.g., the killing of Theo van Gogh, the shooting at Terra College and more recently, the rise of right wing politician Geert Wilders). Understanding the impact of intercultural incompatibilities between honor and dignity may assist in preventing further escalation of existing tensions.

Second, much of the previous research on this cultural framework has compared the cultural ideals of honor and dignity. Focusing on these two ideal allows for formulation and assessment of more concrete hypotheses. Therefore, before introducing my own research, I will first consider previous findings relevant for my analysis.

Honor, insult and aggression

Much of the previous work investigating the impact of honor has focused on how people endorsing honor values respond to possibly offensive interactions. One seminal study in this line of research was conducted by Cohen and colleagues (Cohen, et al., 1996) in an effort to experimentally assess whether participants from the south of the USA would respond more fiercely to an insult than participants from the North of the USA. Participants in this experiment had to walk through a narrow corridor, in which a confederate was positioned who had to make way for the participants to pass by. The second time the participant walks by, the confederate is ostensibly annoyed, bumps into the

participant and calls him an ‘asshole’. Then responses to this insult were assessed and related to the regional background of the participants. This paradigm was used in three different experiments in which different indicators of aggression and dominance were assessed. Cohen and colleagues found that offended Southerners appeared to be more angry, showed more signs of dominance in interpersonal contact, and were physiologically more primed for aggression — i.e. rise in testosterone levels — compared to insulted Northerners who were not strongly affected by the provocation (Cohen, et al., 1996). The authors ascribed this vigilance towards provocations and the vigorous response following it to norms of honor instilled in the Southern culture of the USA.

Many studies have since examined the relation between honor endorsement and aggressive responses to offensive encounters. (Cohen, Vandello, Puente, & Rantilla, 1999; Cross, Uskul, Gerçek-Swing, Alözkan, & Ataca, 2013; Henry, 2009; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Van Osch, et al., 2013; Vandello & Cohen, 2004). For example, archival data have shown higher homicide rates resulting from seemingly trivial interpersonal slights in areas conducive to the development of honor norms in the USA and around the world (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Henry, 2009). Field studies have shown that honor norms pertaining to aggressive responses to personal insults are tolerated to a higher extent in the south of the USA than in the north of the USA, both by people and by institutions (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994, 1997; Hayes & Lee, 2005). Different experiments have shown that insults instigate more anger and aggression among honor culture members, compared to non-honor-culture members (Cohen, et al., 1996; Cohen, et al., 1999; Van Osch, et al., 2013). Additionally, some studies have linked these fierce responses to specific concerns such as family honor and the need to restore one‘s social image in Mediterranean honor cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b; Van Osch, et al., 2013). Moreover, there is research showing that even within the same cultural context, interpersonal differences in honor endorsement significantly predict anger, threat perception,

and more competitive conflict management after an insult (Beersma, Harinck, & Gerts, 2003; IJzerman, Van Dijk, & Galluci, 2007). The latter findings highlight that honor-endorsement is not something specific to certain cultures. In fact interpersonal variations in honor-endorsement affect insult-elicited antagonism, even in cultures in which honor is not a major concern.

The good news about honor cultures

The accumulation of research connecting honor to aggressive responses paints a rather bleak picture of the implications of honor for interpersonal interactions. However, there is also research showing that in honor cultures, aggression is only excused in a limited number of contexts, such as for self-defense or for socializing purposes (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). In fact, a number of studies investigating the link between honor and insults have demonstrated that the least amount of antagonism is usually displayed by those high in honor in the absence of an insult (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996) rather than by those low in honor. Recent research has even connected honor to less competitive and more cooperative behavior in the absence of insults (Harinck, Shafa, Ellemers, & Beersma, 2013; Leung & Cohen, 2011) and prevention of conflict escalation in the initial stages of a confrontation (Cohen, et al., 1999). Additionally, some results indicate that, in the absence of such conditions, the pattern may well be reversed in the sense that aggression is more likely avoided by those high in honor (see also Cohen & Vandello, 2004). Apparently, the relationship between honor and aggression only holds true under limited conditions and should not be generalized thoughtlessly.

The role of honor concerns in explaining and preventing insult-elicited aggression

Despite the accumulation of research connecting honor to aggression, so far only a limited number of studies has investigated what underlying psychological mechanisms might account for diverging responses in insult-elicited aggression (Henry, 2009; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). As such, it is yet unclear *why* people endorsing the ideal of honor respond more fiercely

after being offended. Moreover, hardly any systematic attempts have been undertaken to identify ways in which these negative ramifications of offensive encounters can be prevented or reduced. Therefore, the goal of the current dissertation is twofold. First, I aim to identify which psychological mechanisms and motivational processes are responsible for the way people concerned with honor approach and respond to offensive encounters. Second, building on these new insights, I hope to identify *how* the negative ramifications of offensive interpersonal encounters may be prevented or diminished for those high in honor.

In the following chapters, I will discuss research conducted during the past four years, that will address each of these questions. I do so by systematically investigating the different phases of conflict development and escalation separately. Most of the previous research on this topic has only focused on outcome measures of emotion and aggression *after* an insult, but has rarely considered the *process* by which an ostensibly calm situation seems to unexpectedly blowup into an act of aggression (see also Cohen, et al., 1999). By separating the different phases of conflict development, conflict escalation, and conflict intervention, I hope to gain more insight into how honor influences each specific step in the process that leads to more aggressive responses. This knowledge is important, because it allows for a better understanding of conflict escalation and possible development of conflict resolution methods, by tailoring to each step separately.

In the theoretical framework outlined in this chapter, honor is defined as a cultural logic, a major concern in certain parts of the world and less so in other parts. However, as mentioned before, endorsement of honor ideals differs between and within cultures, be it an honor-culture or else (Leung & Cohen, 2011). People in the same cultural context do not adhere to honor norms to an equal extent. Moreover, it is somewhat problematic to ascribe any cultural difference to honor endorsement, because cultures usually differ on more than one dimension. Additionally, studies have shown that honor is related to

differences on an intercultural as well as on an interpersonal level (Beersma, et al., 2003; IJzerman, et al., 2007). To tackle this issue, in the current dissertation I take a multi-method approach in investigating honor. In some studies, I examine honor on an intercultural level by comparing participants from different cultural backgrounds after ascertaining their levels of honor endorsement. In other studies, I approach honor at an interpersonal level and use interpersonal differences in honor endorsement as a predictor of affect and behavior. In other studies, I employ an experimental manipulation to activate or deactivate honor concerns and investigate the effect of this manipulation on affect and behavior. Where possible, I try to replicate results with different methods. The goal of this approach to study the logic of honor, independent from other — cultural — confounds, such as societal status of ethnic minorities or language barriers, and to determine certain levels of causality when connecting findings to honor. Nevertheless, with this approach, I hope to contribute to knowledge on how cultural ideals influence cognition, emotion, and behavior.

Insults as a methodological tool

An insult can be regarded as a negative comment or gesture about who we are or what we do (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). In most of the studies discussed in this dissertation, I use explicit verbal insults to simulate offensive behavior. For example, in some studies I ask participants to imagine oneself in a scenario in which they are insulted and assess their intentions. In other studies, participants receive verbal insults from a supposed team fellow and I assess their behavior and emotions. These and other insults were gathered during a free writing format among honor- and dignity-culture participants as discussed in Chapter 2. I selected insults that were commonly used and rated as equally severe by participants from both groups.

It is important to note that my goal is not to investigate how people respond to specific types of explicit verbal abuse, but to offensive behavior in general. There are many ways in which people might become offended, be it through physical confrontation, explicit insults, implicit remarks, gossip, and so

on (see also Cross, et al., 2013; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b; Uskul, et al., 2012). Additionally, insulting someone might happen intentionally or unintentionally. However, the goal of this dissertation is not to clarify what people find insulting.

My research focusses on the impact of offensive behavior in the context of interpersonal interactions in day to day situations such as with colleagues, fellow students, neighbors, and so forth. A lack of understanding of both parties' situational goals and personal and cultural norms is likely to turn such interactions into conflicts that arise as the results diverging values, rather than competing resource interest (Harinck & De Dreu, 2004; Kouzakova, Ellemers, Harinck, & Scheepers, 2012). The scenarios and paradigms in my studies are designed in a way that they are offensive, but they do not reflect ruthless provocations. More likely, they resemble interpersonal interaction in the heat of the moment, when people forget to maintain interpersonal respect and communicate in a more direct and confrontational manner. The verbal insults I use serve as methodological tools for this purpose. However, I presume that the reported effects on emotions, intentions, and behavior are not limited to these specific verbal insults, but likely extend to offensive behavior in general — although they may vary in intensity depending on the severity and offensiveness of the behavior. To verify this presumption to a certain extent, in most studies I use more than one scenario or insult type and investigate honor-related difference after collapsing the data over insult type.

Outline of dissertation

In four empirical chapters I investigate the role of honor concerns in understanding and preventing vigorous responses to insults. In **Chapter 2** I focus on the precursor of conflict escalation by examining what seems to constitute an insult and how honor influences this perception. As offensive behavior has considerable potential for escalating a conflict, it is important to understand how this behavior is perceived differently by those high in honor and why this differs from those low in honor. I follow Bond and Venus, who

conceptualize insults as "…a blatant maneuver to establish dominance over another by impugning their competence or morality" (Bond & Venus, 1991, p. 85). In two studies I assess how honor influences the way insulting behaviors defy people's sense of morality vs. competence and whether this effect is mediated by the extent to which an insult is considered offensive. To link my findings to honor, I compare high-honor cultures to low-honor cultures using a multi-cultural sample, and I also compare high-honor participants to low-honor participants by using a mono-cultural sample. Additionally, using a free writing format, I ask participants from different cultural backgrounds to generate insults to be used as potential stimuli in the remainder of the empirical studies.

In **Chapter 3**, I investigate the appraisal of insulting feedback beyond self-reports by assessing cardiovascular indicators of arousal regulation — heart-rate, blood pressure and vascular impedance — and explicit indicators of aggression — white noise. In this study, I build on the Biopsychosocial model of arousal regulation (Blascovich, 2000; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996) which distinguishes between the psychophysiological states of threat vs. challenge. I investigate whether insults instigate more threat and evoke more aggression among participants with — experimentally-induced — honor vs. dignity, and compare these outcomes to a control group who received neutral feedback.

In **Chapter 4**, I try to clarify a seemingly contradictory finding in previous literature. That is, those high in honor are more obliging and forthcoming at the initial stages of a possibly confrontational encounter, while they become more dominant and forceful after being insulted. In order to understand what underlying psychological mechanisms can account for these diverging responses I approach this issue by building on knowledge from Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1996, 1997). Highlighting that honor is associated with a vigilant concern for reputation, I try to demonstrate that both obliging behavior before and confrontational behavior after an insult are driven by prevention focus. In a first study, I examine the connection between honor and prevention focus using a community. In the second and third study, I induce

honor concerns using a newly developed experimental manipulation. I examine honor-related intentions in a situation that has the potential to escalate but has not escalated yet, and in a truly confrontational situation with controlled provocations and aggression — white noise. I assess the role of prevention focus in both types of responses. By doing so, I hope to imbed knowledge about honor into a broader theoretical framework of Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997).

Finally, in **Chapter 5**, I focus on concerns related to the way self-worth is defined in honor cultures, by distinguishing between personal worth — the value of a person in his/her own eyes — and social-worth — the value of a person in the eyes of others. I investigate how reliance on these two sources of self-worth affects the way people respond to an insult. In a first correlational study, I investigate the role of personally vs. socially defined worth in explaining susceptibility to the negative ramifications of interpersonal insults. In a second study, I assess the causal impact of socially defined worth, by investigating whether a social affirmation (vs. a self-affirmation) is effective in reducing insult-elicited aggression. I do so among an honor-culture sample, using an immersive paradigm with controlled provocations and behavioral indicators of aggression — white noise.

These chapters are based on individual articles, written with the intent to submit for publication, and can be read separately and in any order. Additionally, the original articles have been written in close cooperation with my supervisors. Their contribution is reflected by the use of ‘we’ rather than ‘I’ throughout the empirical chapters.

Chapter 2

Who are you calling rude?

Honor-related differences in morality and competence evaluations after an insult

"*Fail to honor people, they fail to honor you*"

Lao Tzu

This chapter is based on: Shafa, S., Harinck, F., Ellemers, N., & Beersma, B. (2014). Who Are You Calling Rude? Honor-Related Differences in Morality and Competence Evaluations After an Insult. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research, 7*(1), 38-56. doi: 10.1111/ncmr.12024

Abstract

In two studies, we examined honor-related differences in morality vs. competence evaluations as a way to tap into social judgment formation after an insult. In Study 2.1 we distinguished between high-honor and low-honor cultures. Participants' evaluations of a norm transgressor were gathered. Results indicated that high-honor participants devalued the transgressor more strongly in terms of morality than competence in comparison to low-honor participants. In Study 2.2, we distinguished between participants with high or low honor values and investigated morality and competence in self-perception. Participants were asked to respond to different types of insults gathered in Study 2.1. High-honor participants were primarily harmed in their morality after being insulted, while this prominence was less apparent in low-honor participants. Both studies showed that those who value honor highly moralize insults to a greater extent because they take more offense to them.

Cultural differences have been the focus of much work in social psychology (Hofstede, 1980; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007b; Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Triandis, 1989). Research has revealed that there is a class of cultures that is particularly relevant to the way people interact with each other in conflict situations. These are so-called honor cultures, common in the Mediterranean, the Middle-East and southern parts of the USA (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen & Nisbett, 1997; Henry, 2009; IJzerman, et al., 2007; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Distinctive for members of honor cultures is their effort to maintain a positive and honorable image. Having honor not only gives entitlement to respect and precedence, but losing honor is associated with humiliation and degradation (Peristiany, 1965).

One way of damaging a person's honor is by offensive behavior or insulting the person (Cohen, et al., 1996). Insults can lead to anger and aggression and have been shown to play an important role in the escalation of conflicts, especially in honor cultures (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996; IJzerman, et al., 2007; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). Several studies have demonstrated a relation between honor and aggressive responses to insults, but there is still little empirical work on why people with high honor concerns respond in such way to insults (see also Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). One possible explanation for why people endorsing honor culture respond more vigorously to insults might relate to the way in which they evaluate themselves and each other after having been insulted. Examining how insults affect people's social evaluations can increase understanding of why people respond differently to them. In the present article, we therefore extend previous research on insults by investigating their impact on social judgment formation. As morality and competence are considered key components of social judgment and have important implications for the way people behave in many settings (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007; Wojciszke, 2005), we examine the implications of insults for perceived morality vs. competence and we assess how honor values affect these perceptions and subsequent behavior. We do so by first investigating

how people from different cultures evaluate somebody else after being insulted by them, and second, by examining how people with high and low honor evaluate themselves after being insulted. Our goal is to increase understanding of *why* insults affect interactions in day to day life differently across different cultural contexts. Understanding these processes more clearly informs us on what the function of insult-elicited aggression is, and what can be done to prevent it.

Honor

Researchers generally distinguish between cultures in terms of individualism (vs. collectivism), power distance, masculinity (vs. femininity) and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007b; Triandis, 1972; Wagner & Moch, 1986). More recently however, researchers have also looked at other cultural syndromes such as *honor*, *dignity*, and *face*. These cultural syndromes do not describe one specific trait but are rather "a constellation of shared beliefs, values, behaviors, practices, and so on that are organized around a central theme" (Leung & Cohen, 2011, p. 2). They are also considered ideals, in the sense that they are not absolute but rather function as guidelines that model social interaction within each cultural setting. This also means that not everyone within each type of culture fully adheres to these ideals. However, these ideals can be very informative for intercultural comparison.

This paper concentrates on the ideal of honor, as previous research has demonstrated that insults are particularly detrimental for people who endorse high honor values (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996; IJzerman, et al., 2007; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). Honor revolves around "…the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society." (Pitt-Rivers, 1965, p. 21). Members of honor cultures are characterized by their adherence to the honor code — a set of rules of conduct — prescribing how people should behave and interact with others in social situations. The honor code encompasses domains such as family honor, social integrity, masculine honor, and feminine honor (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). The way people are

perceived by their peers contributes significantly to honor culture members' worth, more so than in other cultures. For example, one's honor is for a large part based on the extent to which a person or a person's in-group (such as family) is perceived to adhere to honor-related norms. Moreover, a person can only claim honor after it has been paid by others. As a result, honor can be gained or lost depending on one's behavior in a certain context, or even be taken away by others.

It is argued that such cultures are more likely to develop in areas with tough competition as a result of limited resources, that are beyond the reach of law enforcement and federal authority, such as herding communities (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Cohen, et al., 1996; Cohen & Vandello, 2004) but also inner city ghetto's (Anderson, 1994). Interpersonal interactions in these cultures are based on strict reciprocity norms and emotions such as pride and shame are considered more crucial in regulating social behavior (Leung & Cohen, 2011) than in other cultures. For example, in honor cultures, not having a sense of shame is considered a vice (Gilmore, 1987).

In other cultures, external evaluations may play a less important role in defining people's sense of worthiness. For example, people in some cultures endorse the ideal of *dignity*. Dignity pertains to someone's internally defined and inalienable worth (IJzerman & Cohen, 2011; Leung & Cohen, 2011). Dignity is something that is considered innate to every human being. All people are born with dignity and in principle everyone has an equal amount of dignity. The value of a person is thus presumed to be located internally and cannot easily be taken away by others. In such cultures an individual's conduct is guided and evaluated for a large part according to their own internalized moral standards.

Dignity cultures are more common in western, industrialized, individualistic regions such as northern America, Canada, and North-Europe. In the Netherlands for example, values pertaining to achievement and independence are more closely related to a sense of self-worth than in honor cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a). Cultures of dignity are argued to

develop in agricultural communities consisting of independently operating farmers (Cohen, 2001), who cooperate according to a market model. Interpersonal interactions in dignity cultures are based on short term tit-for-tat contracts and social conduct is generally regulated by mechanisms such as law and guilt (Leung & Cohen, 2011), more so than in honor cultures.

In other words, while in honor cultures a person's moral guidelines (honor) are relatively context dependent and alienable, in dignity cultures a person's moral guidelines (dignity) are relatively internalized and inalienable. We argue that these differences affect the way people evaluate themselves and each other and we will explore these differences by investigating honor-related differences in responses to insults.

Insult

An insult can be regarded as a negative comment or gesture about who we are or what we do (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). Insults represent a powerful way of expressing aggression against other people or communicating negative views of other people, but a relatively subtle way of expressing such aggression when compared to physical violence. About 0.3 % to 0.7% of adolescent speakers' daily output consists of offensive words, which averages up to about 60-90 words per day (Jay, 2009). Most of these words are considered conversational swearing and can be triggered by concrete day to day events (e.g., someone jumping the line, or not giving way in traffic). However, insults also carry important implicit social information about underlying views of, and attitudes about, others, depending also on the cultural context. For instance, previous research (Semin & Rubini, 1990) has shown that people in more collectivistic contexts like the south of Italy use more relational insults — "I wish your father an accident"— than people in more individualistic contexts like the north of Italy — "I wish you an accident"— to insult someone. Another well-known phenomenon associated with the cultural specificity of insults is that whereas some insults seem to be universal — e.g., reference to genitals — other types of insults are clearly culture-specific. For example, the reference to an

illness — e.g., cancer sufferer — is considered an insult particularly in the Netherlands, while a reference to the devil or Satan is particularly insulting in Scandinavian countries (Van Oudenhoven, et al., 2008).

One universal function of insults is that they communicate perceived violations of important general and normative values (Van Oudenhoven, et al., 2008). Insults thus convey important contextual information about which norms have been transgressed and which values are at stake. This knowledge is especially relevant to multicultural societies where different cultural value systems co-exist. Unfortunately, research investigating the link between verbal abuse, social evaluations, and culture is scarce or refers to very general distinctions such as individualism vs. collectivism (Semin & Rubini, 1990) or ethnicity-based linguistic preferences (De Raad, van Oudenhoven, & Hofstede, 2005; Van Oudenhoven, et al., 2008).

We believe that knowledge about how people evaluate themselves or each other after an insult is essential in understanding why people respond differently to insults, particularly when people strongly adhere to honor. Indeed research has shown that the concept of honor is strongly tied to social evaluations (Peristiany, 1965; Rodriguez Mosquera, Liskow, & DiBona, 2012; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a). As such, one's social esteem — the extent to which one is valued by him-/herself and by others in social settings — has considerable impact on people's sense of self-worth (honor) in honor cultures. By examining how insults affect people's evaluation, we can more clearly understand why people respond differently to them.

In our research we will elaborate on previous findings by focusing on underlying values of morality and competence to theoretically ground our predicted differences. Our aim is to assess the effect of insults on people's self- and social perceptions as a way to gain more insight in the way insults influence day to day interactions.

Morality vs. competence

Insulting someone is one of the many forms in which people pass judgments on others. Indeed, Bond and Venus conceptualized an insult as "…a blatant maneuver to establish dominance over another by impugning their *competence* or *morality*" (Bond & Venus, 1991, p. 85; italics added). Research has shown that morality and competence are two evaluative domains central to social judgment of individuals as well as groups (Brambilla, Rusconi, Sacchi, & Cherubini, 2011; Wojciszke, 2005). Morality refers to whether the goals that people aspire to are beneficial or harmful for others (Wojciszke, 2005). This means that morality concerns traits that are considered other-profitable such as honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity (G. Peeters, 1992). Competence refers to characteristics associated with effective and efficient goal attainment; it is about how well people strive for their goals, not the goals themselves (Wojciszke, 2005). Therefore it refers to traits that directly benefit or harm the trait possessor (G. Peeters, 1992). Characteristics associated with competence are might, intelligence, creativity, and skill.

Judgments of morality and competence are considered key components "…basic to survival in the social world" (Brambilla, et al., 2011, p. 135; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007). Several lines of research have demonstrated that evaluations on these two dimensions form the basis for social judgments of both individuals and groups. Moreover, many researchers have found that in general, morality has primacy over competence with respect to judgment formation (Brambilla, et al., 2011; De Bruin & Van Lange, 1999; Ellemers, Pagliaro, Barreto, & Leach, 2008; Leach, et al., 2007; Pagliaro, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2011; Wojciszke, 2005). For example, it has been widely demonstrated that moral characteristics have a greater bearing on impression formation of others than competence characteristics (Brambilla, et al., 2011; De Bruin & Van Lange, 1999; Wojciszke, 2005). This is because when we encounter someone we do not know, we first have to assess whether the intentions of this person are

good or bad, before we assess whether the person is capable of enforcing those intentions (Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998).

Cultural differences

Heretofore, most researchers have investigated the primacy of morality and competence compared to each other in one cultural setting. However, to what extent and in what way people value these domains in different cultural contexts has not been systematically addressed so far. Moreover, the implications of such cultural differences in judgment formation in the specific context of a transgression on emotions and behaviors are also unknown. We propose that people from different cultures differ in the value they attach to the dimensions of morality and competence. More specifically, we propose that the primacy of morality in relation to competence will be stronger in honor cultures. There are several theoretical arguments to support this statement.

First, we argue that the primacy of morality is the result of honor culture members' concern for reputation and vigilance towards offenses. Morality is considered an indication of a person's intentions (are they good or bad?) while competence is an indication of a person's capabilities (can they impose on me or not?). Honor cultures are believed to develop under circumstances of limited resources, high competitiveness, and a lack of central law enforcement (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Cohen, et al., 1996). Under those circumstances, it is conceivable that people are mainly concerned with ascertaining as soon as possible whether others are of good intentions and trustworthy or not, particularly in a confrontational setting. Also, in order to maintain and to protect the group from threats, transgressions of moral standards have to be addressed immediately.

Assessment of might on the other hand may be less crucial because harm is easily imposed anyway. In low-honor cultures, where circumstances are less competitive, people consider others more as their equal and social interaction is governed by short term tit-for-tat contracts (Leung & Cohen, 2011), concerns

for moral judgments — though still important — might be less crucial in person evaluations.

Moreover, this heightened concern for moral judgments in honor cultures is not only limited to evaluations of others, but also to the way people view and present themselves. In honor cultures one's worth is more context dependent and alienable, because it depends on one's reputation and the amount of honor one receives from other group members (Peristiany, 1965). Research has demonstrated that adherence to moral norms is more important for securing group members' respect than adhering to competence norms (Pagliaro, et al., 2011). This means that members of honor cultures have a stronger incentive to adhere to moral norms, because it secures them the respect they need from their group members. In low-honor cultures, on the other hand, self-esteem is a greater source of personal worth than social esteem. Wojciszke (Wojciszke, 2005) has demonstrated that evaluations of the self, as indicated by self-esteem, rely more on notions of self-competence than notions of self-morality. In other words, a person's evaluations of their own competence-related attributes were better predictors of their self-esteem, than a person's evaluations of their own morality related attributes.

Present studies

We argue that insults have a stronger impact on people's morality concerns vs. competence concerns when they endorse honor. As such we hope to take a first step in more accurately classifying insult-elicited aggression as serving a moral purpose. In some previous research it has been theorized that vigorous responses to insults among those high in honor might stem from competence concerns: retaliation is necessary so that one does not appear weak (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Cohen, et al., 1996). However, we argue and empirically demonstrate that insults threaten (self-)perceptions of morality more than competence among those high in honor. If insults are indeed moralized more by those high in honor, subsequent responses may serve to address moral failure and restore moral standards rather than competence.

In our studies we assess both dimensions of morality and competence after an insult because they are crucial parts of social judgment formation and relevant to the concept of insults (Bond & Venus, 1991). For example, previous research has demonstrated that insults can address both immorality and incompetence in many cultures (e.g., stupidity and physical disabilities, see also Semin & Rubini, 1990; Van Oudenhoven, et al., 2008). In a similar vein, insults to both immorality and incompetence are considered offensive to some extent, irrespective of cultural background (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). Additionally, by contrasting the two dimensions to each other within each group, we can rule out that general evaluative differences between groups drive the reported effects.

Our main interest in this research is the interplay of honor and insults. Because honor endorsement is not necessarily tied to culture and because culture does not only influence honor endorsement (Leung & Cohen, 2011), we considered honor as an intercultural as well as an intracultural variable in our studies. In Study 2.1 we compared native Dutch participants to participants with an honor culture background (see also Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). In Study 2.2, we used an honor concerns questionnaire to distinguish between high and low honor ideology endorsement within a sample of Dutch participants (see also Beersma, et al., 2003; IJzerman, et al., 2007).

In summary, in this paper we investigate honor related differences in how insults impact the way people evaluate themselves or each other. We do so by extending previous findings on honor and insults to the social evaluative domains of morality and competence. We expect that, when people high in honor endorsement are confronted with insulting behavior, they consider this to be more indicative of immorality, rather than incompetence, compared to people low in honor endorsement. We also expect that this effect is mediated by stronger feelings of being offended among those high in honor. In two studies, we investigate how high and low-honor participants evaluate others (Study 2.1) and themselves (Study 2.2) after an insult.

Study 2.1

In Study 2.1, we focused on how people with different cultural backgrounds evaluate another person's insulting behavior. We hypothesized that high-honor culture participants would consider insulting behavior to be more severe and offensive than low-honor culture participants. We also hypothesized that, although people in general judge others more readily in terms of morality rather than competence, this difference would be amplified among those from a high–honor culture. Finally, we predicted that this difference between groups in their preference for a morality judgment could be accounted for by honor culture participants heightened concerns for being offended. We tested our hypotheses by having participants indicate their response to an offensive episode and to judge the transgressor in terms of morality and competence.

Method

Participants

One hundred and eighty-three participants (103 female, 56%, M_{age}, = 20.87, *SD* = 2.73) took part in Study 2.1. They were recruited on college grounds around different large cities in The Netherlands. Participants who were born in honor cultures, or whose parents (at least one) were born in honor cultures — countries in the Middle-East, the Mediterranean and South America — were categorized as high-honor participants (*n* = 76), while participants from Dutch parents who were born in the Netherlands themselves were categorized as low-honor participants (*n* = 107). Gender and age were distributed equally among both groups. Five gift certificates of €40 were raffled off amongst participants as a reward for their participation.

Instruments and procedure

Candidates were asked to participate in a study on norm transgressions. After consenting, they received the questionnaire in paper and pencil format. The questionnaire consisted of several scales and a scenario describing a norm transgression. First, honor concerns were measured using a twelve-item questionnaire.

Then participants read the following scenario:

> *Imagine that you are waiting in line at a bank, because your debit card is broken. It is near closing time and you have yet to buy a present for a good friend. When, after waiting for 15 minutes your turn comes up, a man/woman steps in and walks straight to the counter. When you claim that it was your turn, the man/woman ignores your account. He/she tells you not to be so rude and to wait politely for your turn* [1]

Participants were asked to write down insults or offenses they might think of in this situation against the transgressor. These insults were gathered to be used in Study 2.2. Please note that the scenario did not specify whether the transgression was an act of immorality (e.g., purposefully cheating the line) or incompetence (e.g., having overlooked the row). Next, three variables — severity and offensiveness of the transgression and the amount of negative affect — were measured. Participants were also asked to indicate to what extent they thought the transgressor was immoral and incompetent. Finally, demographics were gathered. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their cooperation and had the opportunity to leave their email address if they wanted to participate in the raffle. All items were measured on seven-point Likert scales, unless stated otherwise.

Measures

Honor concerns. Because honor is considered important in all cultures, but to a different degree, we included an *honor concerns* measure to assess the assumption that participants from a high-honor culture background indeed endorsed honor to a higher extent than participants with a low-honor culture background. The honor concerns scale (α = .82) was adapted from the original

[1] In half the cases the transgressor was a male, in the other half the transgressor was a female. Preliminary analyses showed no differences on the various dependent measures in respect to the gender of the transgressor. Therefore, the data were collapsed in the final analyses.

scale by Rodriguez Mosquera and colleagues (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). Per honor domain three items were selected that reflected the content of that domain adequately and were also relevant for our student sample, in order to keep the length of the questionnaire acceptable. Items on this scale describe a situation and participants are asked to indicate to what extent it would reduce their self-worth if they were in such a situation (1 = *not at all,* 7 = *very much*). This scale measures honor-related domains such as family honor (e.g., *To what extent would it diminish your self-worth if you would personally damage your family's reputation?*), social integrity (e.g., *To what extent would it diminish your self-worth if you were known as someone who is not to be trusted?*), masculine honor (e.g., *To what extent would it diminish your self-worth if you were known as someone who is not able to defend himself/herself when insulted)* and feminine honor (e.g., *To what extent would it diminish your self-worth if you would were known as someone who wears sexually provocative clothing?).*

Control variables. Previous research has demonstrated that insults might — though not always — raise general negative assessments such as negative affect or the severity of a particular insult (Beersma, et al., 2003; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). Hence, we included two variables to control for and to rule out general negative assessments of the transgression as an explanation for honor-related differences on morality vs. competence evaluations. These control questions asked about the *severity* of the transgression (e.g., *How severe do you think this transgression is*?) and *negative affect* (e.g., *How upset would you be*?). Each variable was measured with three items with answers ranging from 1(*not at all*) to 7 (*very much,*$\alpha_{severity}$ = .74; $\alpha_{negativity}$ = .78).

Offensiveness. *Offensiveness* of the transgression was also measured using three items (e.g., *How offended would you be?*, α= .83) with answers ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much.*

Immorality. Participants indicated to what extent they considered the transgressor to be *immoral* on a scale consisting of six items (α = .78), with

answers ranging from 1= *not at all* to 7 = *very much*. Both positively worded (e.g., *To what extent do you consider this person to be honest?)* and negatively worded items were used (e.g., *To what extent do you consider this person to be unfair?*). Before analyses, positively worded items were recoded such that a higher score indicated more immorality.

Incompetence. Participants were also asked to indicate to what extent they considered the transgressor to be *incompetent*. Six items were used to measure this scale (α = .75), with answers ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*. Items were worded positively (e.g., *To what extent do you consider this person to be intelligent?*) as well as negatively (e.g., *To what extent do you consider this person to be incompetent?*). Before analyses, positively worded items were recoded such that a higher score indicated more incompetence. The five latter scales were developed for the purpose of this study.

Results

Table 2.1

Correlations Study 2.1

	Honor	**Negative affect**	**Severity**	**Offensiveness**
Negative affect	-.03			
Severity	.11	.74		
Offensiveness	.35*	.27*	.50*	
Imm-Inc	.24*	.24*	.27*	.27*

Note. n = 183, * p < .001,

Unless otherwise stated, the data were analyzed by means of ANOVA with cultural group (high honor vs. low honor) as independent variable. Table 2.1 gives an overview of the correlations between the different measures.

Honor concerns. To test the proposition that participants in the honor group actually endorsed honor values to a greater extent than participants in the low-honor group, the mean score on the honor concerns scale was compared

between the two groups. It was confirmed that participants from a high-honor culture background scored significantly higher on honor concerns (M = 5.38, SD = 0.85) than participants from a low-honor culture background (M = 4.87, SD = 0.88), $F(1, 181) = 14.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$.[2]

Control variables. The scores on the two control variables severity and negativity of the transgression were compared between groups to determine whether participants interpreted the situation differently. None of the effects reached significance (all Fs < 2, ps > .13). This means that both groups considered the transgression to be equally severe and negative.

Offensiveness. As expected, there was a significant main effect of group on the offensiveness measure, $F(1, 181) = 28.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$. High-honor participants reported to be more offended (M = 4.65, SD = 1.46) by the transgression than low-honor participants (M = 3.58, SD = 1.22). Thus, although both groups considered the transgression to be equally severe and negative, high-honor participants did report to be more offended by it.

Immoral vs. incompetent. Participants evaluated to what extent they considered the transgressor to be immoral or incompetent. First, both scales were entered in a paired sample t-test to assess whether immorality was higher in both groups than incompetence. Results indeed showed a significant effect, $t(182) = 3.73$, $p < .001$; $r = .26$, indicating that in general participants considered the transgressor to be more immoral (M = 5.79, SD = .96) than incompetent (M = 5.60, SD = 1.02).

Mediating effect of offensiveness on immorality-incompetence. To assess cultural differences in the way participants devalued the transgressor and the mediating role of offensiveness, a new variable was created by subtracting

[2] Because the honor culture group was ethnically diverse, we also tested whether intragroup differences were present on the honor-concerns scale. Honor-culture countries were grouped by continent and honor concerns were compared with ANOVA. No significant intragroup differences were found in the honor-culture group, $F(3, 72) = .696$, *ns*.

the incompetence score from the immorality score for each participant, thus creating a measure of the precedence of immorality. Positive scores indicated precedence of immorality and negative scores indicated precedence of incompetence in the devaluation of the transgressor. We then entered this variable as a dependent measure in a mediation analysis model with culture as a predictor and offensiveness as the mediator, using a bootstrap method as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2004)[3]. Results are depicted in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Mediational effect of culture on immorality-incompetence through offensiveness

	B	***SE***	***t***	***p***	**BCa 95 % CI**
Total effect	.34	.10	3.23	.001	
Culture to Offensiveness	1.03	.20	5.09	<.001	
Offensiveness to Imm-Inc	.10	.04	2.83	.005	
Indirect Effect	.11	.04	2.49*	.01	.02 - .23
Direct effect	.23	.11	2.17	.03	

Note. Culture (Low honor = 0, High honor = 1)*;* n = 183; Bootstrap = 5000, BCa = Bias Corrected and accelerated, * = Sobel Z

As can be seen in Table 2.2, the significant regression coefficient of the direct effect of culture on the difference score indicates that high-honor culture participants gave even more precedence to immorality evaluation vs. incompetence (M = 0.39, SD = 0.76) than low-honor culture participants (M = 0.05, SD = 0.62). Moreover, assessment of the mediation effect demonstrated that this difference is significantly (though not fully) accounted for by the extent to which participants felt offended by the transgression. These results thus

[3] We only used offensiveness as a mediator in a simple mediator model, because previous analyses had shown that culture only affected offensiveness and not severity and negative affect.

demonstrate that, as hypothesized, the extent to which high-honor participants are concerned with reputation and being offended accounts significantly for their stronger devaluation of the transgressor in terms of morality in comparison to competence.

Discussion

This study revealed that members from different cultural groups respond differently to the same instance of offensive behavior. Participants in general considered the transgressor to be more immoral than incompetent. As hypothesized, this difference was even amplified among high-honor culture participants compared to low-honor culture participants. We also found support for our notion that this difference is accounted for by honor culture participants' concerns for reputation and (not) being offended, as demonstrated by the intermediating effect of offensiveness. In general, Study 2.1 confirms our prediction that moral norms indeed have more precedence over competence norms in high-honor cultures at least with respect to the way members evaluate a transgressor after an insult.

One limitation in this study is that we used only one scenario, which makes it difficult to generalize our findings to different everyday situations. We cannot rule out that the stronger devaluation in the moral domain is a result of the particular transgression and specific type of insult. Moreover, a stronger devaluation of another person in terms of moral concerns was to be expected when judging others concerns irrespective of the level of honor, as previous literature has shown that morality is a more central domain than competence, especially when evaluating others (Brambilla, et al., 2011; Ellemers, et al., 2008; Wojciszke, 2005). Would a similar effect occur when people had to evaluate themselves after an insult?

Furthermore, in this study we distinguished between members of different groups on the basis of their ethnic background. Therefore it was not possible to control for other variables that might have explained the differences we found. For example, all our participants might have been thinking of a native Dutch

transgressor in the scenario, which would have constituted an in-group member for the low-honor group and an out-group member for the high-honor group. This may also be a reason for why we only found a partial mediational effect. We conducted a second study to address these limitations.

Study 2.2

In the first study, we reported differences between high-honor and low-honor participants as members of different cultural background. The findings confirmed the notion that norms regarding what is considered offensive and inappropriate in others may be even more strongly linked to morality than to competence in high-honor cultures, in comparison to low-honor cultures. However, these findings do not necessarily reflect how people evaluate their own morality vs. competence, especially when they are the target of such insults. Additionally, in view of our interest in the connection between judgment formation and conflict escalation, it is important to assess not only how people respond to these insults at an emotional level (i.e., what they consider to be offensive), but also how they respond in terms of their behavioral strategy.

In order to examine the effect of honor values on different responses to insults irrespective of cultural background, in the second study we distinguished between high and low-honor participants on the basis of their adherence to the honor code as measured by the honor concerns questionnaire of Rodriguez Mosquera et al. (2002b). This method has been used in previous studies to isolate the predictive value of honor-related concerns (Beersma, et al., 2003; IJzerman, et al., 2007) especially because recent research suggests that not all members of a culture necessarily adhere to prevailing cultural norms (Leung & Cohen, 2011)

To study the way people with high and low honor values respond to different types of insults, we used insults from Study 2.1. We presented a selection of these insults to participants followed by questions regarding their emotional and behavioral responses to each of these insults. We selected different types of insults, in order to prevent our results from being restricted to

one type of insult. We hypothesized that high-honor participants would consider the insults more severe and offensive than low-honor participants. Furthermore we hypothesized that participants would consider themselves more immoral than incompetent, and that this difference would be even greater among individuals with high honor concerns, as found in Study 2.1. We further hypothesized that among high honor participants, feelings of being offended and not so much the severity of the insults would mediate the higher sense of immorality.

In regard to the behavioral inclinations of participants after an insult, we did not specify any hypotheses, because previous research on this topic is somewhat contradictory. Most studies report aggressive responses after a clear provocation (Cohen, et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008), as well as a more reserved and avoidant response — especially at the initial stages of a confrontation — (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1999; Harinck, et al., 2013).

Method

Procedure and participants

Participants were recruited randomly in the waiting room of a medical center and were asked to participate voluntarily in a study on insults. After consenting, they received the booklet containing the questionnaires. After completion participants were thanked and given the option to partake in a raffle. Five gift certificates of € 15, - were raffled off amongst participants. Sixty-one participants (37 female, M_{age} = 32.79 years, SD = 14.29) took part in Study 2.2. Of all participants 77% was from Dutch decent. Other ethnicities were predominantly European (e.g., German). Only six participants (10 %) had a background associated with honor cultures (Turkish and Moroccan). Exclusion of these participants did not affect the results, so they were included in the analysis.

Instruments

Insults collected in Study 2.1 were used as stimuli in Study 2.2. In previous work, insults have been categorized based on their content reference (Van Oudenhoven, et al., 2008). After inspection of the gathered insults, we selected eight insult categories that were found to be most common among our data. The insult in these eight categories formed about 63% of the totally collected insults and were good representatives of commonly used insults in. In case of gender relevant insults, we printed both the male and female version of an insult. The insults that were used were: mental inability (idiot, retard), antisocial (rotter, antisocial), threats and curses (drop dead, get lost), indecency (slut/faggot, whore/anal goer), genitals (dick/cunt, prick/twat), family (your mother/whorechild), diseases (cancer sufferer, typhoid sufferer), and miscellaneous (piss head, Bozo). As can be seen, we selected two insults per insult category — e.g., *cancer sufferer* and *typhoid sufferer* for diseases — to create two versions of the same questionnaire. Each version was administered to half of the participants. Preliminary analyses revealed no differences on the responses between the two versions. Therefore the data were collapsed. Using different examples from different categories of insults allowed us to measure our participants' response regardless of the content of a specific insult.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of eight sections. In each section a different type of insult was introduced and the same set of questions was asked about how participants appraised that specific insult (*severity* and *offensiveness*), how they viewed themselves when insulted like that (*immoral* and *incompetent*) and how likely they would behave in a certain manner (*avoid* and *aggress*) if such an insult was uttered at them. The final part of the questionnaire contained the same honor scale as Study 2.1. All variables were measured using five-point scales (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*) unless otherwise stated.

Measures

Honor concerns. This variable was measured on seven-point scales (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much,* α = .86) with the same questionnaire we used in Study 2.1.

Severity. Participants first indicated how unpleasant it would be if someone familiar and someone unfamiliar would insult them in such a way. Preliminary analyses revealed that there were no systematic differences in how people felt depending on whether the insults came from a familiar or unfamiliar person[4]. Correlations between the two items ranged from $r = .49$ to $r = .79$, all ps <.001. Therefore, for each category of insult, the scores on these two items were averaged, creating a single variable indicating the *severity* of that insult.

Offensiveness. Three items were used for each insult to measure how offended participants would be if they were insulted in such a way (upset, hurt, and offended; reliability coefficient of all sets ranged from α = .78 to α = .89). The three measures were combined into one *offensiveness* variable for each insult category.

Immorality-incompetence. To investigate self-perception after the insult, participants were then asked whether this insult would make them feel like an immoral person — we used the Dutch term 'slecht mens', literally translated into 'bad' or 'evil human being' — or an incompetent person — we used the Dutch term 'stom mens', literally translated into 'stupid human being'. To examine the primacy of morality over competence in self-perception after an insult, a new variable was created by subtracting the incompetence item from the immoral item for each insult category, thus creating a difference score. Positive scores on this item indicate that an insult made people feel more

[4] Paired t-tests revealed that only in the threats category it made a difference whether the insult was coming from a familiar or an unfamiliar person, $t(60) = 3.11$, $p = .003$, $r = .38$. Participants considered it to be worse when a threat insult came from a familiar person $M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.52$ vs. from an unfamiliar person $M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.34$.

immoral than incompetent, whereas negative scores indicate that people felt more incompetent than immoral after an insult.

Avoidance. To investigate their action tendencies, two items were used to measure if participants would employ a passive and avoidant strategy (ignore, walk away). Both items correlated significantly in all insult categories, ranging from $r = .27$ to $r = .56$, all ps $< .037$, and were combined into one *avoidance* measure.

Aggression. There were also significant correlations between the two more active and confrontational items (insult back, aggress) in the categories miscellaneous, threats, family, and disease, $r = .36$ to $r = .52$, all ps $< .006$. The correlation between the two confrontational items in the categories mental inability, antisocial, indecency, and genitals were non-significant. However, combined and separate analyses yielded the same results. For practical reasons we will discuss the results for the combined *aggression* measure.

Results

Table 2.3 gives an overview of the correlations between the different measures. Unless stated otherwise, the honor concerns questionnaire was used as a continuous independent variable and analyses were done on the aggregated score on a variable (i.e. aggregated over the eight different insult categories)[5].

Severity and Offensiveness. The severity and offensiveness measures were highly correlated (see Table 2.3). More central to our hypothesis, both

[5] Similar results were found if we treated the eight insult categories as separate and performed Repeated Measures ANCOVAs on the dependent measures, with honor concerns as independent variable. Only in the case of the immorality vs. incompetence variable, the results were slightly different. The Repeated measures ANCOVA on the immorality-incompetence measure yielded a significant effect of honor concerns, $F(1, 58) = 5.58$, $p = .022$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$ indicating that higher honor concerns caused people to feel more immoral than incompetent about themselves. Moreover, the linear between-subjects effect of insult categories was also significant $F(1, 58) = 4.09$, $p = .048$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$ and was qualified by a significant interactional effect of honor concerns and the insult categories $F(1, 58) = 6.12$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. This means that there was also an increase in the precedence of morality over competence in self-perception as insults became more severe, and that this effect was mainly present among those high in honor concerns.

variables were also significantly correlated with honor, as predicted. This means that people with high honor concerns considered the insults more severe and more offending than participants with low honor concerns.

Table 2.3

Correlations Study 2.2

	Honor	**Severity**	**Offensivenes**	**Imm-Inc**	**Avoid**
Severity	.59**				
Offensivenes	.48**	.85**			
Imm-Inc	.25*	.24	.35**		
Avoid	.15	.35**	.47**	.13	
Aggress	-.07	.03	-.02	-.06	-.40**

Note. $n = 61$, ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$,

Immoral vs. incompetent. There was also a significant correlation between this variable and the honor concerns measure (see Table 2.3). Those with higher honor concerns thus reported to be more strongly harmed in terms of morality (I am a bad human being) than competence (I am a stupid human being) compared to those with low honor concerns after being insulted.

Interestingly, and in line with our hypothesis, this variable also correlated significantly with the offensiveness measure but not with the severity measure. To further explore the relation between honor, offensiveness and severity of the insults, and the precedence of morality vs. competence devaluations, these variables were entered in a multiple mediation analysis as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008). The mediation analysis (see Table 2.4) indicated that offensiveness completely mediated the effect of honor concerns on the primacy of the morality evaluation. The results also indicated that the contrast between offensiveness and severity of the insults is significant and there is no

meditational effect of the latter variable[6]. These findings are all in line with our hypothesis that the extent to which high honor participants consider an insult to be more strongly damaging for their sense of morality rather than competence is due to the fact that they consider the insults more offensive, but not because they consider them more severe.

Table 2.4

Mediational effect of honor concerns on immorality-incompetence through offensiveness and severity of insults

	B	***SE***	***t***	***p***	**BCa 95 % CI**
Total effect	..08	.04	2.00	.04	
Indirect effect of Offensiveness	.08	.04	2.07*	.03	.02 - .23
Indirect effect of Severity	-.05	.04	-1.26*	n.s.	-.24 - .02
Contrast	.13	.08	1.73*	.08	.01 - .47
Direct effect	.05	.04	1.14	n.s.	

Note. $n = 61$; Bootstrap = 5000, BCa = Bias Corrected and accelerated,
* = Sobel Z

Avoidance and Aggression. As can be expected, the correlation between the behavioral inclinations of avoidance and aggression was significantly negative (see Table 2.3). Moreover, it is clear that participants indicated a

[6] Additional analyses showed that competence and morality evaluations separately did not correlate with the proposed independent variable, honor concerns (rs < .18, ps > .15). This means that the significant correlation between honor concerns and the morality vs. incompetence measure is really due to the difference between those two domains and not due to one or the other. Also as can be expected from the mediation analysis, only the correlation between morality and offensiveness was significant ($r = .37$, $p = .003$). The correlation with competence was not significant ($r = .21$, $p = .11$).

stronger preference for avoidance in response to more severe and offensive insults, while there was no relation between these two appraisal dimensions and aggression. However, we did not find a significant correlation between the measure of honor concerns and participants' behavioral inclinations. This means that honor concerns did not affect our participants' preference to either aggress or avoid after being insulted.

Discussion

In Study 2.2, insults collected in Study 2.1 were used to examine the different emotional and behavioral responses participants would report in reaction to these insults. Responses were compared between participants with respect to their honor concerns. High-honor participants reported stronger negative emotions such as being hurt and offended after being insulted than low-honor participants. These findings highlight the notion that the maintenance of a positive social image is considered more important in honor cultures and offenses to one's image harm a person's feelings (Beersma, et al., 2003).

Interestingly we found that the behavioral responses to the insult do not necessarily align with the appraisals. Despite the fact that they were more offended, participants in the high-honor group were not more likely to indicate to engage in aggressive behavior, nor would employ more avoidant strategies. It is possible that we did not find any differences on the behavioral scales, because participants only rated the insults without a specific context or scenario in which they would be expected to respond to the insult. However, it might also be that those high in honor inhibited their initial behavioral tendencies as a way to prevent possible escalation (see also Cohen, et al., 1999). We will return to this issue in the General Discussion.

More relevant to our hypotheses, we found that honor values influence the way participants interpret the insult. After being insulted, high-honor participants experience a stronger sense of immorality than a lack of competence, compared to low-honor participants. Moreover we demonstrated that this difference between high and low-honor participants was due to the fact

that the same insult is considered more offensive to high-honor participants. This finding supports the results of Study 2.1 and our notion that moral concerns have more primacy in relation to competence among high-honor people, because of their heightened concern for being treated with respect and not be offended.

General discussion

In our research, we focused on two central domains of judgment formation, morality and competence (Wojciszke, 2005) and we elaborated on the notion that morality generally plays a more central role in social evaluations than competence (Ellemers, et al., 2008; Leach, et al., 2007; Wojciszke, et al., 1998). We hypothesized that, given their heightened concerns for the prevention of offensive behavior and the preservation of honor, respect, and social image, people with high honor values will consider morality even more central than competence, compared to those with low honor values. We examined this hypothesis by investigating both intercultural and interpersonal differences in honor values across two studies.

Results of both studies indicated that when confronted with a norm transgression, be it cutting in line or insolence, this leads to a stronger feeling of being offended if one adheres more strongly to honor values. These findings are in line with some of the previous research in which it has been demonstrated that some insults elicit more shame in those high in honor compared to those low in honor (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2012; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b).

Both studies also revealed that when honor plays an important role — as cultural or interpersonal variable — people tend to give precedence to norms relating to morality than to competence when judging others and themselves after being insulted. When confronted with an offensive transgression (Study 2.1), high-honor participants considered the same transgressor to be more immoral than incompetent when compared to low-honor participants. Moreover, after receiving insults themselves (Study 2.2), high-honor participants reported to perceive themselves as more immoral than incompetent, compared to low-honor participants. Further analyses demonstrated that the offensiveness of the

insult accounts for why people with high honor values consider the same offense to indicate immorality more than incompetence. This was found for judging both others as the self.

These findings have implications for a better understanding of honor related differences in social evaluations and responses to insults. Our results indicate that there is truly more at stake for high-honor people in the face of insults. They not only have to endure more negative emotional consequences when they are insulted such as feeling offended. They also are more likely to consider the matter to be a case of moral failure. A cautionary conclusion might be that aggressive responses to an insult may thus be a way of maintaining moral standards, since evaluations on this domain have important implications for emotions and behavior in many contexts (Ellemers, et al., 2008; Leach, et al., 2007). We know from recent research that shame following moral failure results in self-defensive motivation and other-condemnation when people are concerned with their social image (Gausel & Leach, 2011). Additionally, conforming to moral group norms is an important way to secure in-group respect (Pagliaro, et al., 2011), which is particularly important for those high in honor. Although our data do not clearly link moral failure to behavioral tendencies, they are a first step in more clearly understanding and classifying honor-related behaviors and motivations in response to insults.

Our results also indicate that after an insult, a dispute might more readily develop into a matter of what is good or bad instead of who is right or wrong. We know from previous research that disputes that revolve around differing values and moral convictions — as opposed to conflict of interest — are more detrimental and harder to resolve (Harinck & De Dreu, 2004; Kouzakova, et al., 2012). Research on moral value conflicts may thus better inform us on how to prevent honor related conflicts from emerging and how they can be resolved once they have arisen.

Another implication of the current findings is that interventions aimed at buffering a person's moral concerns might be effective in countering the

negative consequences associated with being insulted among those high in honor. This knowledge might be particularly relevant for interventions during intense conflicts, in which parties are likely to express negative or demeaning views towards each other. For example, prior to negotiations, mediators might employ such interventions to buffer moral concerns and prevent the need to aggress or retaliate when confronted with an insulting counterpart. A final implication of these studies is that the interplay of honor and insults are not only restricted to culture or ethnicity. Even among Dutch participants, we were able to show that those who endorsed honor to a greater extent reported more negative experience and moral devaluation than those who endorsed honor to a lower extent. As a result, concerns for the maintenance and protection of one's social image, reputation, and honor are relevant for conflict development and conflict resolution across different contexts.

Interestingly, our results also indicate that mere negative experiences do not directly lead to more aggression. These findings may at first seem irreconcilable with general findings in previous research demonstrating that honor culture members show more vigorous responses to confrontational episodes and offenses (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). However, these earlier findings too are not completely consistent, as in some studies honor culture members responded more vigorously to insults than non-honor culture members, but also seemed to demonstrate less confrontational behavior before an insult was uttered or at least in the initial stages of conflict (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1999; Harinck, et al., 2013). For example, Beersma and colleagues (Beersma, et al., 2003) found that insults lead to more aggressive behavior in high-honor participants than in low-honor participants. However, this effect was mostly driven by the observation that high-honor participants were much less likely to react aggressively than low-honor participants when they were not insulted. Interactions reported by Cohen and colleagues on measures of dominance and aggression — firmness of handshake, distance at which subjects give way —

also show this similar pattern (Cohen, et al., 1996). They seem to be at least equally driven by less dominant and aggressive behavior of the honor culture participants when they are not insulted. Moreover, in some previous studies, participants were asked to think back to specific situations in which their honor had undeniably been harmed (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008), while in our studies participants might have chosen to distance themselves from the situation by opting to ignore the insults or walk away, before sufficient harm was done to their honor.

It is important to realize that we do not state that high-honor culture members are more moral than low-honor culture members. Most of the research on the relation between social identity concerns and the primacy of morality is conducted in what we in this study consider low-honor cultures, confirming the primacy of morality in these cultures as well (De Bruin & Van Lange, 1999; Ellemers, et al., 2008; Leach, et al., 2007; Pagliaro, et al., 2011). We underline these notions, and we argued and demonstrated that the primacy of morality in relation to competence is even stronger in high-honor cultures compared to low-honor cultures following an insult. We also demonstrated that this primacy is the result of the greater vigilance towards offenses and higher concerns for treating and being treated with honor and respect.

Strengths and limitations

In two studies we demonstrated that when honor concerns are high, people tend to devalue others and themselves more readily in terms of morality than competence after being insulted. Thus we were able to take two different perspectives in order to disentangle the effect of insults on social judgment formation. By using insults produced in Study 2.1 by a culturally diverse sample, we were also able to present participants in Study 2.2 with stimuli which were genuine and fitting in a confrontational episode. Moreover, the fact that we used a community sample in this study adds to the possibility to generalize these findings.

Another strength of this research is that in Study 2.1 group membership (high vs. low honor) was confirmed by differences on the honor concerns questionnaire, corroborating ethnic differences in honor endorsement. However, the use of different cultural samples may also limit the accuracy of the reported results, as there is less control over other variables that covary with culture which may contribute to the differences we found. Moreover, we did not assess dignity values of our low-honor culture sample in order to distinguish the two cultural groups more evidently.

Therefore, in Study 2.2, we used the honor scale as an individual-difference variable within one culture. By using this latter method, we can more effectively show that indeed differences in honor values drive the effect. The use of a mono-cultural sample by itself does not necessarily inform us on cultural differences based on ethnicity. However, endorsement of honor is not necessarily tied to cultural ethnicity but can also develop at the meso level. Two examples are the culture of honor in the US South (Cohen, et al., 1996), and the Street culture in inner cities (Anderson, 1994). In both cases, a subculture of honor has developed within a broader cultural system, but as a result of the same contextual factors (i.e., limited resources, competitiveness, lack of central law enforcement). Second, as argued in previous studies (e.g. Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a) and in the current paper, honor concerns are prevalent in all cultures, but there are cultural differences in the way they are construed and in their relative importance. Thus, by using one cultural sample, we can more effectively show that indeed differences in honor values drive the effect.

Conclusion

Through the examination of social evaluative domains after an offensive episode, our studies reveal that morality and competence play different roles for different people in the same situation. People who adhere to honor judge more readily in terms of morality than people who adhere to a lesser extent to honor, as is apparent by their responses to and evaluations of norm-transgressing behavior and after verbal abuse. These findings advance our theoretical

knowledge of intercultural differences and contribute to conflict prevention and intervention by demonstrating that abusive behaviors and verbalizations may be moralized less among people with low honor values. For those who are concerned with their honor however, these insults have a more profound and severe impact because they violate their sense of morality to a greater extent.

Chapter 3

Adding injury to insult:

The impact of honor on physiological indicators of threat and challenge in response to insults

"*He who has lost honor can lose nothing more*"

Publius Syrus

This chapter is based on: Shafa, S., Harinck, F., Ellemers, N., & Beersma, B. (*under review*). Adding injury to insult: the impact of honor on physiological indicators of threat and challenge in response to insults.

Abstract

To investigate the link between honor vs. dignity ideals and reaction to insults regardless of a specific cultural context, we experimentally induced honor en dignity concerns in participants within one cultural context. Then, participants were insulted (or not) during an ostensibly cooperative computer task after which cardiovascular indicators of threat and challenge were measured. In a following task, participants were given the opportunity express their aggression towards the same opponent during a Competitive Reaction Time task. When honor was activated, participants experienced threat after being insulted and expressed more aggression. When dignity was made salient, participants experienced challenge after being insulted and expressed less aggression. These results empirically demonstrate that insults instigate a sense of threat among those high in (experimentally-induced) honor.

Previous research on the way cultural values affect interpersonal behavior has shown that people from an honor culture tend to respond with more anger and aggression to an offense compared to people from a dignity culture (Cohen, et al., 1996; Cohen, et al., 1999; Henry, 2009). This pattern is not restricted to cultural differences; even within one cultural context, people who strongly adhere to honor ideals tend to respond more vigorously to insults and provocation, compared to people adhering less to honor (Beersma, et al., 2003; IJzerman, et al., 2007). However, little is known about the underlying psychological mechanisms driving these effects.

In the current study, we approach honor-related differences in response to insults from a novel perspective by turning to the biopsychosocial model of arousal regulation (Blascovich, 2000; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996). This model distinguishes between two psychological states— challenge and threat — and their accompanying physiological states of arousal regulation. In this study we examine how insults affect people's arousal regulation when they are or when they are not concerned with honor, by assessing cardiovascular indicators of threat and challenge following an encounter in which people received either negative or insulting feedback. By doing so, we aim to get a better understanding of why people respond more vigorously to insults when their honor is at stake.

Honor

Honor plays an important role in many societies in how people define themselves, the extent to which they are valued by their group and the way they interact with other people. Honor is defined as the value of an individual in his own eyes, and in the eyes of his society (Pitt-Rivers, 1965). As such, honor — besides representing an internal quality — is a social construct. Honor not only communicates the esteem of an individual, bestowed upon him or her by others, it also communicates the sensitivity of the individual for that same public opinion (Gilmore, 1987). Maintaining a positive social image and protecting one's reputation to ensure favorable evaluations is considered key among those

adhering to honor (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2000, 2002a). The necessity to maintain an honorable reputation and vigilance towards threats to that image is something that all honor cultures share.

Dignity

Honor is often contrasted to dignity. Dignity is defined as the value of an individual, least equal to that of every other person (Ayers, 1984; Leung & Cohen, 2011). Dignity pertains to an internalized sense of moral values and guidelines, and less strict social norms. In dignity cultures, it is believed that the worth of each individual is intrinsic and stable. People are born with dignity and it cannot be taken away by others. Dignity thus entails not having to rely on others' approval in order to be valued. Correspondingly, people are less worried about others disapproval to jeopardize their worthiness. People in dignity cultures operate more autonomously and are less likely to be influenced by others' opinion than people in honor cultures (Kim, Cohen, & Au, 2010; Leung & Cohen, 2011).

For example, research has shown that in dignity cultures — commonly found in western, individualized societies such as the northern parts of the USA and Western Europe — a person's pride is associated with achievement and autonomy rather than social interdependence and family reputation (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a). Additionally, compared to honor cultures, people in dignity cultures tend to show less sensitivity to insults and threats to their honor in terms of anger, aggression and the need to restore one's social image (Cohen, et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Van Osch, et al., 2013).

It is important to note that both ideals of honor and dignity play a part in defining their sense of self-worth for most people, regardless of cultural background. For example, upholding moral standards (personal integrity) is very important for people in both honor and dignity cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). Additionally, self-esteem has been shown to be linked to social evaluative cues such as the sense of being included or excluded, even in dignity cultures (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). Thus, honor and dignity are

both important concepts, though there are differences in the extent to which each is considered principal in different cultures. A number of studies have provided evidence for the notion that honor is associated with higher sensitivity to self-threatening situations such as being insulted (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). The aim of the current research is to identify the psychological impact of such conditions when either honor or dignity concerns are salient, in order to better understand how such sensitivity can be explained. In particular, we aim to investigate whether a potentially offensive situation is considered more threatening by those concerned with honor compared to those concerned with dignity.

Threat vs. Challenge

According to the psychosocial model of arousal (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996), people respond differently to tense situations based on the inference of the demands and available resources to cope with said situation. For example, when people make the appraisal that they have enough resources to cope adequately with the demands of a tense situation, they are more likely to be challenged by that situation. However, when people make the appraisal that the available resources do not meet the demands required to cope adequately with that situation, they will more likely be threatened by the situation.

The psychosocial model of arousal also posits that each of these psychological states is associated with a specific cardiovascular reaction. A psychological state of challenge is associated with the activation of the sympathetic-adrenal-medullary axis (SAM) resulting in increased cardiac performance and decreased vascular resistance. A psychological state of threat is also associated with SAM axis activation, accompanied by pituitary-adrenal-cortical (PAC) axis activation, resulting in increased cardiac performance but little to no change or even an increase in vascular resistance (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996; Mendes, Blascovich, Lickel, & Hunter, 2002).

Assessment of cardiovascular indicators of challenge and threat is useful in understanding honor-related responses to insults for several reasons. While

challenge and threat are both adaptive ways to cope with stress, they result in different short-term and long-run outcomes. For example, challenge has been linked to performance-approach motivation leading to mobilization of cognitive and physical resources and enhanced performance (Chalabaev, Major, Cury, & Sarrazin, 2009; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey, & Leitten, 1993). On the other hand, threat is associated with higher levels of subjective stress, a decrease in performance and rigid conflict management (de Wit, Scheepers, & Jehn, 2012; Mendes, et al., 2002). Thus, appraising a conflict as a threat may have a very different and possibly detrimental effect on the way people manage the situation compared to when they experience challenge.

Cardiovascular measures also have merits beyond traditional self-reports and behavioral indicators. First, cardiovascular indicators provide us with online measurements which can be assessed right at the relevant moment. This allows us to gauge appraisals during tense and complex situations such as possibly offensive interaction. Second, cardiovascular indicators are gathered unobtrusively; because participants are unaware of the exact moment of measurement, they are less able to manipulate or inhibit their response (Mendes, et al., 2002). Third, threat and challenge are motivational indicators, indicating why people respond in a certain way.

Study 3

The aim of the current study was to examine the effect of honor concerns on psychophysiological indicators and aggression. Previous studies have examined these effects more indirectly. For example, there is research linking differences in cortisol and testosterone levels to honor, while honor endorsement was not assessed (Cohen, et al., 1999). Other studies have assessed honor endorsement, but do not report about the direct link between measures of honor ideology and aggressive responses to insults (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). Moreover, in cross-cultural research, it is often not possible to exclude other ethnicity-related factors (such as language barriers and socio-economic status of ethnic minorities) as alternative explanations for the results. Therefore, we

decided to experimentally activate honor concerns within a single cultural setting in order to establish a direct causal link between honor concerns and responses to insults.

We hypothesized that when honor is made salient, insults instigate a sense of threat because they are considered a threat to honor (Cohen, et al., 1996). Therefore, these participants were expected to show a cardiovascular response associated with threat and higher levels of aggression after being insulted. When dignity is made salient, we expect a pattern associated with challenge rather than threat. Because dignity is associated with less sensitivity toward external judgments and evaluations (Kim, et al., 2010), these participants are more likely to remain challenged during a demanding task and demonstrate lower levels of aggression.

Method

Participants and Design

A total of 114 social sciences undergraduate students participated in this study. Since it was our aim to activate honor and dignity concerns in one cultural setting, 16 nonnative Dutch participants were excluded from analysis. Additionally, four participants were excluded because they did not believe our cover story that they were working together with a second participant. This resulted in a total of 94 participants with gender and age distributed equally among conditions (76 female, age M = 19.35, SD = 1.87). The study had a two (ideal condition: honor vs. dignity) by two (feedback condition: insult vs. control) between subject design.

Instruments and procedure

After entering the lab, participants were informed about the nature of the study and the additional measurement of cardiovascular indicators. To avoid suspicion about the actual procedure, we informed them that the study concerned the effect of digital communication on cooperation. Participants were told that they would be paired with a random second participant whom they did not know, and would perform two tasks together. After consenting, participants

were randomly assigned to one of four conditions, placed in individual cubicles and ECG (cardiac performance), ICG (impedance) and blood pressure sensors were attached to them. During the first five minutes of the experiment, participants were told to relax and watch a short clip while baseline measures were collected.

Next, to make participant's honor vs. dignity concerns salient, we used an experimental manipulation. Participants first responded to a set of leading questions (see also Libby & Eibach, 2002; Shafa, Harinck, Ellemers, & Beersma, *under review*) to invoke agreement with honor vs. dignity ideals. The topic of each question was matched in both conditions, but the formulation of the question was such that it would either represent an honor ideal in the honor condition (e.g., My value as a person also depends on how others value me) or a dignity ideal in the dignity conditions (e.g., Other people cannot take away my value as a person). Next, participants were asked to think about and describe a personal situation in which they needed to maintain a positive reputation in the honor condition and a positive self-image in the dignity condition. A similar versions of this manipulation has been used previously to successfully activate or deactivate honor concerns in a Dutch sample (Shafa, et al., *under review*). Additionally, we pretested the current manipulation in a pilot study. Results indicated that participants in receiving the honor manipulation scored significantly higher (M = 5.07, SD = .86) on a questionnaire assessing family honor, $F(1, 28) = 4.27$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$ (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b) than participants receiving the dignity manipulation (M = 4.16, SD = 1.41), but were not affected in their level of self-esteem, $F(1, 28) = .33$, $p = .57$ (Rosenberg, 1979).

This ideal manipulation was followed by the first cooperation task, which consisted of three rounds. In each round, participants were (supposedly randomly) assigned to solving a series of ten word puzzles and forwarding their answers to their collaborator via a network connection, who had to use these answers to solve a mystery question. Participants were told that, to mimic the

restriction of real digital communication, interactions were limited to two instances of feedback per round from the question solver to the puzzle solver through an internal chat system. Participants were in fact not matched to another participant, but received preprogrammed responses. This way, participants were always at the receiving end of six instances of feedback. Two of these instances (first and third instance) were equal for both feedback conditions and reported what the mystery questions were. The other four instances varied across feedback condition. In the control condition, participants received neutral feedback about their performance (e.g., "*Are you managing?*"). In the insulting feedback condition, participants received four instances of offensive feedback about their performance (e.g., "*You're turning this into a fucking mess.*"). Some of the word puzzles were fairly difficult to answer correctly, so all participants were bound to make mistakes, which made the negative feedback more credible.

Directly after the first task, participants were asked to evaluate this part of the cooperation by recording a video message using the webcam. The goal of this task was to create a motivated performance situation in order to assess cardiovascular indicators (Blascovich, 2000; de Wit, et al., 2012; Scheepers, 2009). After one minute, a 'continue' button appeared at the bottom of the screen so participants were able to continue with the experiment when done recording. If not stopped by the participants, the recording would continue for a maximum duration of three minutes.

After the speech task, participants started the second cooperation task with the same supposed collaborator. This was in fact the Competitive Reaction Time Task (CRT; Meier, Robinson, & Wilkowski, 2006; Taylor, 1967). This task is played over 25 trials, in which participants have to react as quickly as possible to a stimulus appearing on the screen. Whoever responds quicker in a trial is allowed to send a dose of white noise to the opponent, which is played back through a headphone. Participants select the intensity of each noise burst – from 60 dB to 105 dB with increments of five dB - at the beginning of each round. The intensity selected by participants has been validated as a measure of

aggression against the opponent (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Meier, et al., 2006). Participants always win the first trial of this task and then randomly win or lose the following 24 trials. We programmed the noise intensity as such that after losing, participants would receive a steadily climbing noise level over the course of the task, in order to mimic conflict escalation (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998).

After completion of the second task, the network connection was supposedly terminated and participants continued individually. At this point, the effectiveness of the honor/dignity manipulation and participants' self-esteem was assessed, followed by an open-ended question allowing for the participants to make comments on the previous tasks. Participants who were suspicious about the actual existence of another participant were excluded from analyses. In the end, participants were fully debriefed, thanked and rewarded (€ 5 or course credits).

Measures

Physiological indicators. Cardiovascular signals were recorded at 1000 Hz using a Biopac MP150 system (Biopac Systems Inc., Goleta, CA). ECG signals were recorded with two spot electrodes on the anterior torso using an EKG100C amplifier (Biopac Systems Inc., Goleta, CA). ICG signals were recorded with four spot electrodes on the posterior torso using a NICO100C amplifier (Biopac Systems Inc. Goleta, CA). Systolic and diastolic blood pressure were measured with an inflatable finger cuff around the middle phalanx of participant's non-preferred middle finger using a Nexfin HD system (Bmeye B.V., Amsterdam, The Netherlands). The ECG, ICG and blood pressure signals were recorded with Acknowledge software (Biopac Systems, Goleta, CA). All data were scored blind to condition using Matlab and AMS-IMP software (Free University, The Netherlands). After first inspection of the data, signals that could not be scored due to movement artifacts or measurement error were

rejected[7]. In order to ascertain the required engagement in the motivated performance task, we recorded the number of heart beats per minute and (HR) and calculated pre-ejection period (PEP, interval between electrical stimulation and opening of the aortic valve) by determining the time between the Q-point in the ECG and the B-point in the ICG (de Wit, et al., 2012). The combination of a significant rise in HR and a significant drop in PEP during a task (compared to a baseline measure) indicates motivated performance.

To assess challenge and threat, we also calculated cardiac output (CO, volume of blood pumped by the heart in one minute), and total peripheral resistance (TPR, overall vascular resistance), following a standard procedure (Sherwood, et al., 1990). In line with standard practice (Blascovich, 2000; Scheepers, 2009; Sherwood, et al., 1990), cardiovascular indicators of threat and challenge were assessed after subtracting the final minute of the baseline measure from the first minute of the video speech task, which was our motivated performance situation. These measures were then used to calculate a Threat Challenge Index (TCI). To do so, z-scores were calculated for both measures at first. Next, we gave CO a weight of 1 and TPR a weight of -1 and calculated the sum of these two figures. As such, a positive score on this index indicates a challenge response while a negative score indicates a threat response (de Wit, et al., 2012; Seery, Weisbuch, Hetenyi, & Blascovich, 2010).

Aggression. The level of noise bursts administered during the Competitive Reaction Time task (Taylor, 1967) were used as an indication of participants' aggression towards their supposed opponent. This measure varied between 60 dB and 105 dB. In some research the first noise burst is analyzed separately from the remaining 24 noise bursts while in other research all trials

[7] The cardiovascular data of 15 participants could not be scored reliably due to poor ICG or blood pressure signals. Four participants were removed from analysis because their HR or TPR reactivity scores differed more than 3,5 standard deviations from the mean. This resulted in 75 participants' whose physiological data could be analyzed reliably.

are averaged. (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Meier, et al., 2006). For the purpose of conciseness, we will only discus the results pertaining to the average measure. The reported results were similar in the first trial and approached significance. However, neither including nor excluding the first trial affected the significance of the findings for the average noise administered.

Anger. Four items were used to measure how angry participants were during the task (e.g., *To what extent were you upset, angry, annoyed, aggravated?*) as a way to assess their response to the feedback they received. This scale (α = .85) was measured on seven-point scales (1= *not at all*; 7 = *very much*).

Honor concerns. Three items of the family honor concerns questionnaire (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b) were used to assess participants honor values (α = .50). For example, an item in this honor domain was: *To what extent would it harm your self-worth if you were known as someone who is not able to protect your family's reputation*. Answers were given on seven-point scales (1= *not at all*; 7 = *very much*). We focused on this domain because previous research has shown that this domain is most likely to differentiate between honor and dignity culture values (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2012; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979). This scale consists of ten items (α = .93) and measures self-esteem with both positively and negatively worded items (e.g., *On the whole, I am satisfied with myself*). This scale was measured using seven-point scales (1 = *totally disagree*; 7 = *totally agree*). We added this measure to control for possible interfering effects of our experimental manipulations and the offensive remarks.

Additionally, participant's gender, age and place of birth were recorded. All control variables were measured at the end of the procedure.

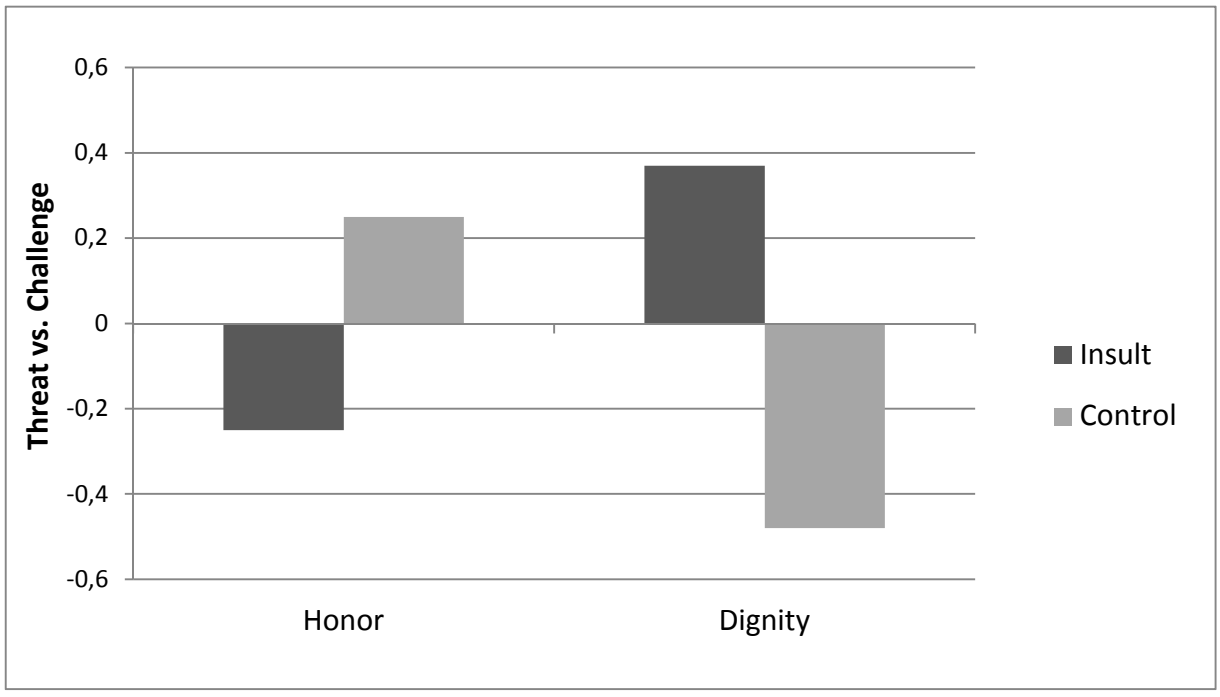
Results

Unless reported otherwise, we analyzed data using ANOVA, with ideal condition and feedback condition as independent variables. Results are discussed in chronological order; descriptive statistics are shown in Table 4.1.

Motivated performance. We assessed engagement during the video task by contrasting the HR and PEP scores of the baseline measure to the HR and PEP scores of the video task using dependent sample *t*-tests. During the speech task, HR rose significantly $t(74) = -8.89$, $p < .001$, $r = .72$ and PEP dropped significantly $t(74) = 8.90$, $p < .001$, $r = .72$ compared to the baseline. These results indicate that the speech task was indeed a motivated performance task, enabling us to assess cardiovascular indicators of threat and challenge during this period.

Figure 3.1

Ideal by feedback interaction effect on TCI



Threat and Challenge. We found a marginally significant interaction effect for the TCI, $F(1, 71) = 3.95$, $p = .051$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Inspection of the means

(see Figure 3.1) show that, as expected participants in the honor condition who were insulted showed cardiovascular reactivity associated with a threat state (*M* = -0.25, *SD* = 1.77), while those who were not insulted appeared to be more challenged (*M* = 0.25, *SD* = 1.72). Interestingly, and according to our expectations, this pattern was reversed in the dignity condition, where insulted participants seemed more challenged (*M* = 0.37, *SD* = 1.01) compared to the not insulted participants who were more threatened (*M* = -0.48, *SD* = 1.38).

Aggression. There was a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 90) = 3.99$, $p = .049$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$ on the noise level administered by participants. Inspection of the means (see Table1) using simple effect analyses indicated that insulted participants in the honor condition administered higher levels of white noise (*M* = 75.94, *SD* = 12.89) compared to not insulted participants (*M* = 68.81, *SD* = 11.43; $F(1, 92) = 3.83$, $p = .053$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$). This difference between insulted (*M* = 70.11, *SD* = 11.89) and not insulted participants (*M* = 72.50, *SD* = 9.29) was not present in the dignity condition $F(1, 92) = .60$, $p = .44$. As expected and in line with previous research, the honor group responded with more aggression after an insult, while an insult had little impact on aggression among those in the dignity group.

Anger. We assessed group differences in the extent to which participants reported anger after the procedure. There was a significant interaction effect of ideal and feedback $F(1, 90) = 4.49$, $p = .037$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$ (see Table 4.1). Interestingly, simple effect analyses showed that participants in the honor insult condition reported to be less angry (*M* = 3.03, *SD* = 1.28) compared to participants in the honor control condition (*M* = 4.03, *SD* = 1.37; $F(1, 92) = 5.95$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$). This difference was however not present between the dignity insult condition (*M* = 3.65, *SD* = 1.31) and the dignity control condition (*M* = 3.51, *SD* = 1.16; $F(1, 92) = .15$, $p = .69$)[8]. There were no significant main effects (all Fs < 2.56, ps > .11).

[8] Adding the anger scale to the analyses of aggression or cardiovascular indicators as a covariate resulted in similar outcomes.

Honor concerns. We did not find any significant effects on the honor concerns scale (all Fs < 1, ps > .43). Contrary to expectation, participants in the honor condition did not report higher honor concerns (M = 4.74, SD = .89) compared to participants in the dignity condition (M = 4.71, SD = 1.02).

Self-esteem. We did not find any differences on the self-esteem scale. The analysis yielded no significant effects (all Fs < 1.22, ps > .27), indicating that the ideal manipulation nor the type of received feedback affected participants' self-esteem.

Discussion

In the current study, we experimentally activated honor or dignity concerns in a group of (dignity-culture) participants and we assessed cardiovascular indicators of threat and challenge as well as behavioral indicators of aggression in response to insulting feedback. Assessment of cardiovascular indicators demonstrated that when honor was made salient, a tense situation such as an offensive encounter is more likely to instigate a threat response. On the other hand, when dignity is made salient, offensive remarks rather instigate a challenge response. These findings are novel because they are one of the first to establish a direct link between activation of honor concerns and the differential appraisals of insults, even when a sense of honor is experimentally activated.

Surprisingly, the effects on the cardiovascular indicators reversed in the control condition, where participants received critical—but not insulting—feedback. While participants in the honor-control condition showed a challenge response, participants in the dignity-control condition showed a threat response. This pattern might be explained by the specific characteristics of the task, combined with the way participants interpret the feedback depending on whether honor or dignity was made salient. The feedback conveyed two messages; a content-related evaluation about the participants' performance on the task, and a social evaluation of the participant by the other person. Participants in the honor condition were supposed to rely more on the social evaluation and where thus threatened by the insulting feedback and challenged by the non-insulting

feedback. Participants in the dignity condition were supposed to focus more on the content-related evaluation. As a result, they may have experienced threat in the critical condition when they realized they were performing poorly on the task. However, they became challenged in the insult condition, perhaps because this type of negative social evaluation is considered 'over-the-top' and inappropriate, so they may have discounted the insulting feedback.

As expected, when honor was made salient, participants responded with higher levels of aggression towards a supposed antagonist who insulted them compared to when they received non-insulting feedback. These results are indirect evidence for the effectiveness of the honor manipulation and in line with previous research on honor. These results not only conceptually replicate the finding that insulting honor results in more aggression, but also corroborate that the lowest levels of aggression are found in the honor-no-insult condition (see also Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen & Nisbett, 1997). This reoccurring observation has nevertheless received very little attention so far.

A surprising finding was the low amount of anger in the honor-insult condition. Since participants in this condition felt more threatened and expressed more aggression, one would also expect higher levels of anger. However, there is prior research showing that anger following offensive encounters subsides more quickly among those from an honor culture, once the anger has been expressed, while it tends to linger when it is not expressed (Cohen, et al., 1999). It might be the case that participants in the honor-insult condition let go of their resentment once they had to chance to express it by administering higher levels of white noise.

The current study adds to previous research on honor and dignity by establishing a more direct link between both honor and dignity ideals and responses to insults. By using a manipulation of honor and dignity concerns, rather than comparing people with different cultural backgrounds, we can discard interfering effects of differences associated with regional background or societal position. Additionally, we incorporate for the first time cardiovascular

measures of arousal regulation into the honor-dignity framework, demonstrating that insults instigate a threat response when someone's honor is at stake. As previous research has shown, a state of threat is associated with numerous detrimental consequences such as higher levels of subjective stress, diminished performance, and the tendency to behave rigidly in the course of conflicts (Chalabaev, et al., 2009; de Wit, et al., 2012; Mendes, et al., 2002; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kibler, & Ernst, 1997).

Additionally, we were able to activate honor concerns and evoke aggression to insults among a group of people who all live in a dignity culture and who are generally less affected by insults. It would be interesting to also consider the alternative; whether it is possible to create an experimental manipulation for people from an honor culture to become less sensitive to insults. Such a manipulation is not only interesting from a theoretical or experimental perspective, but it may also form the basis for an intervention that can be used to ease conflict management and negotiation in potentially honor-threatening situations.

However, there are also some limitations to this study. For example, we did not find any significant correlations between the behavioral measure of aggression and the cardiovascular indicators. This lack of covariance between physiological indicators and traditional — behavioral or self-report — measures is not uncommon in psychophysiological research (Mendes, et al., 2002; Scheepers, 2009), but does not necessarily invalidate each of the two types of measures. As Scheepers concludes, cardiovascular indicators are unconscious markers of a certain psychological states, but they do not necessarily have to lead to other outcomes associated with these states. Additionally, the reported effects on the cardiovascular indicators were largest in the dignity condition. This might be due to the fact that we employed a dignity manipulation as well, to activate dignity ideals in a group of participants that are known to endorse dignity ideals by default. Possibly, re-emphasizing these concerns amplified the outcomes in that condition.

Conclusion

Experiencing an offensive encounter has a different impact on people who are concerned with honor compared to those who are concerned with dignity. People who are concerned with honor show a physiological threat reaction and approach an insulter more aggressively —compared to people who are concerned with dignity. Interestingly, once this aggression was expressed and had served its function, participants were more likely to let go of their resentment. These findings inform us about the underlying psychological mechanisms of cultural differences in conflict escalation following insults.

Table 4.1

Descriptive statistics per condition, significance of ideal by feedback interaction and correlation

	Honor		Dignity		Interaction		Correlations								
	Insult	**Control**	**Insult**	**Control**	***F***	***P***	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**	**6.**	**7.**	**8.**	**9.**
1. HR	**7.05** (7.50)	**4.67** (5.65)	**7.02** (5.59)	**7.48** (7.54)	**.82**	**.37**	-	**-.41***	**.25**	**-.26**	**.27**	**.14**	**-.29**$^{+}$	**-.12**	**-.07**
2. PEP	**-9.78** (9.01)	**-9.71** (10.72)	**-11.41** (10.50)	**-8.00** (8.51)	**.51**	**.47**	**-.22**	-	**-.72****	**.59****	**-.73****	**-.01**	**.27**	**-.11**	**-.21**
3. CO	**.06** (.33)	**.16** (.30)	**.15** (.18)	**.07** (.17)	**2.25**	**.14**	**.30***	**-.76****	-	**-.66****	**.94****	**-.16**	**-.15**	**-.02**	**.13**
4. TPR	**201.48** (991.86)	**-61.65** (1416.7)	**-273.79** (796.09)	**574.14** (1481.8)	**4.20**	**.044**	**-.01**	**.39****	**.50****	-	**-.87****	**-.23**	**.19**	**-.03**	**.01**
5. TCI	**-.25** (1.77)	**.25** (1.72)	**.37** (1.01)	**-.48** (1.38)	**3.95**	**.051**	**.16**	**-.64****	**.84****	**-.89****	-	**-.21**	**-.18**	**.01**	**.08**
6. Aggression	**75.94** (12.89)	**68.81** (11.43)	**70.11** (11.89)	**72.50** (9.29)	**3.99**	**.049**	**.15**	**-.01**	**.00**	**.03**	**-.02**	-	**.16**	**.04**	**.22**
7. Anger	**3.03** (1.28)	**4.03** (1.37)	**3.65** (1.31)	**3.51** (1.16)	**4.45**	**.037**	**.07**	**-.04**	**.19**	**.09**	**-.05**	**-.08**	-	**.09**	**-.01**
8. Honor	**4.77** (.95)	**4.72** (.86)	**4.85** (.95)	**4.57** (1.09)	**.31**	**.58**	**.05**	**.05**	**.19**	**.06**	**.06**	**.18**	**-.06**	-	**-22**
9. Self-esteem	**5.01** (1.25)	**4.85** (1.24)	**5.23** (1.05)	**5.14** (.92)	**.02**	**.88**	**. 22**	**-.34***	**.17**	**-.12**	**.16**	**.18**	**-.15**	**.23**	-

Note. We found no significant main effects. Correlations in the top half of the table concern the honor condition, correlations in the bottom half of the table concern the dignity condition. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; $^{+}p < .1$ (two-sided), 1-5 df = (1,71), 6-9 df = (1,90).

Chapter 4

Regulating honor in the face of insults

"*Honor is like an island, rugged and without a beach;*
once we have left it, we can never return"
Nicholas Boileau

This chapter is based on: Shafa, S., Harinck, F., Ellemers, N., & Beersma, B. (*under review*). Regulating honor in the face of insults.

Abstract

Previous research has examined honor-related responses prior to and after an insult but little is known about what underlying mechanisms explain this behavior. We connect honor concerns to Self-Regulation Theory and we argue that honor is associated with prevention focus in an escalatory setting. In three studies, we investigated the role of prevention focus as a motivator of obliging behavior prior to and aggressive behavior after conflict escalation among those high in honor. In Study 4.1 we found higher levels of prevention focus among high-honor participants, compared to low-honor participants, in a community sample. In two following studies we experimentally activated honor concerns and demonstrated that indeed, those high in honor were more accommodating in their initial approach to a conflict (Study 4.2), but showed more aggression once they engaged in an actual insulting interaction (Study 4.3). Additionally, both types of responses proved to be (at least partially) driven by higher levels of prevention focus. Our findings provide initial empirical support for the idea that when honor is at stake, prevention concerns relate to obliging responses before as well as aggressive responses after conflict escalation following insults.

In Western culture, honor is considered a somewhat archaic concept, mostly applicable to very specific groups or organizations such as the military. However, in many cultures, honor is a very important societal concept, prescribing normative behavior and guiding social conduct in all levels of society (Peristiany, 1965). In these so-called honor cultures, grave importance is attached to social image and reputation of the individual as well as the family (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2000, 2002a).

Previous research has focused on the influence of honor-culture endorsement and the way people respond to insults. After being insulted, members of honor cultures tend to become angrier and show more aggression than members of non-honor cultures (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997; Cohen, et al., 1996; Van Osch, et al., 2013). This response is not limited to cultural differences. Even within the same cultural context, people who are more concerned with honor tend to respond more vigorously and competitively to insults (Beersma, et al., 2003; IJzerman, et al., 2007). Most studies report that those who adhere strongly to honor are not only more antagonistic after an insult, but also more friendly or cooperative when there is no insult (see also Harinck, et al., 2013); however, this latter observation has attracted less attention. Moreover, the effect of insults on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses has been documented extensively, yet it is still unknown which underlying psychological mechanisms might explain these effects.

The goal of the current research is to provide a new perspective on honor-related conflict escalation after an insult by connecting it to Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997). In this paper we present both correlational and experimental research to assess this mechanism. Moreover, by experimentally inducing salience of honor concerns in participants with a similar cultural background, we isolate the effect of honor from other cultural differences. This allows us to examine the processes of maintaining and protecting honor in the

face of insults and specify the role of the underlying psychological mechanisms involved.

Honor

Traditionally, cultural psychologists differentiate between cultures on the basis of seminal international value research by Hofstede and colleagues (Hofstede, 1980; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007a; Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). This line of work examines differences in cultural values such as individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance. More recently, there is more focus on an alternative approach that emphasizes cultural *logics* rather than values. These logics may be particularly informative because they weave together a "constellation of shared beliefs, values, behaviors, practices, and so on that are organized around a central theme" (Leung & Cohen, 2011, p. 508).

One such theme is the logic of honor. Based on anthropological research, honor has been defined as 'the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society' (Pitt-Rivers, 1965, p. 21). In honor cultures, a person's *worth* is defined in terms of his claim to honor but also the extent to which he is considered honorable by his society (Gilmore, 1987; Peristiany, 1965). This means that honor has both an internal and an external component. Honor cannot be claimed unless it is acknowledged by others – likewise it can be taken away if it is challenged by others (Miller, 1993). Therefore, members of honor cultures particularly strive for positive social evaluations and a good reputation, because positive social evaluations are an important source of their sense of worthiness.

Research has also shown that honor can refer to different personal and relational domains, such as personal integrity, masculine, and feminine honor (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a, 2002b). Nevertheless, the domain that is especially relevant to people's worth in honor cultures is family honor

(Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2000, 2002b). In the current research, we focus on this domain, because previous research has demonstrated that this domain is culturally the most central part of honor (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2012; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). Additionally, recent research has demonstrated that it is not masculine honor but family honor that predicts aggressive responses towards insults in Mediterranean cultures (Van Osch, et al., 2013).

Honor and insults

Previous research has examined honor-related responses to insults. This work demonstrated that high-honor participants become more upset, are physiologically more primed for aggression, and respond more vigorously and more competitively after being insulted compared to low-honor participants (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996; IJzerman, et al., 2007; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). These results clearly illustrate that people who endorse honor are more inclined to react strongly to insults. Nevertheless, there is also evidence that prior to or in the absence of an insult the pattern is reversed. For example, in their study Cohen and colleagues observed that, prior to being insulted, honor culture members were more polite and friendly than non-honor culture members (Cohen, et al., 1996). Whereas this line of research has traditionally focused on the finding that honor culture participants respond more aggressively after being insulted, the differences obtained can also be explained by the obliging behavior of the honor culture participants who were not insulted. Moreover, Beersma and colleagues (2003) also highlight that relative cooperativeness is observed among those high in honor. In their study, honor concerns were negatively correlated with competitive conflict intentions. Additionally, recent research by Harinck and colleagues corroborates that in the absence of an insult, honor-culture members handle a conflict situation more constructively than non-honor culture members (Harinck, et al., 2013).

Thus, although most researchers have emphasized that honor endorsement can elicit aggression-related outcomes, we also focus on the other side of the same coin, by examining whether the absence of insults is associated with more obliging and constructive behavior among honor culture members (Harinck, et al., 2013). We also argue that these seemingly incompatible responses actually result from the same underlying psychological mechanism, relating to the way in which people strive to achieve or maintain their honor-related goals. Thus, our aim is to identify the motivational inclinations that drive obliging as well as aggressive behavior and why those concerned with honor respond so differently prior to and after an insult.

Preventing loss of honor

We propose that when honor is salient, preventing loss of honor is the reason why people respond more obligingly prior to an insult, while this also explains why they respond more vigorously after an insult. This notion can help reconcile seemingly inconsistent results to date. As stated before, preventing loss of honor is an important concern among those who endorse honor values. Because honor is transient and relies on social affirmation, people concerned with their honor and reputation may experience that they have more to lose than people who are less concerned with their honor. In fact, Leung and Cohen (2011) argued that in honor cultures, those who are not concerned with opinions of others are considered unworthy of honor. Operating obligingly and cautiously in interactions can help to remain in other people's grace as a way to ensure a positive evaluation. Accordingly, it has been suggested that norms of friendliness in honor cultures effectively prevent unintended threat to other people's esteem resulting in spirals of aggressive responses (Cohen & Vandello, 2004; Cohen, et al., 1999).

Conversely, impugning someone's honor is a sure way to escalate a tense situation. Doing so always involves the risk of retaliatory action, as a threat to

honor requires restoration, even if this is by means of violence (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Indeed, it has been demonstrated that high-honor participants tend to react vigorously to insults as a mean to restore their threatened social image after an insult (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). These findings thus seem to suggest that honor-related aggression can be used as a self-defensive strategy, mainly driven by the motivation to prevent an undesired outcome: the loss of honor (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Hayes & Lee, 2005).

If honor indeed activates concerns for the maintenance and protection of reputation, this should be apparent in the motivational inclinations that drive people's behavior, especially in a potentially escalatory situation. However, to our knowledge most of the prior research has examined outcome *behavior following* an insult. Therefore, little is known about the distinct motives of high-honor vs. low-honor people in such situations. To shed further light on these issues, we build on insights from Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997) to inform us on why and how people pursue honor-related goals in the face of insults. The novelty of this approach is that it explicates the *process* of maintaining honor in different phases of a possibly insulting situation.

Regulatory Focus Theory

According to Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997), people are motivated to make their current state match a desired end state. However, the strategies that people employ to reach desired goal strongly depend on the specific characteristics of their goal. Higgins (1997) distinguishes between end states that can be characterized as ideal goals (goals associated with nurturance, growth and gains) and ought goals (goals associated with safety, responsibility and losses). Each type of goal elicits a different focus, which is characterized by different strategies, resulting in different emotions when the desired end state is or is not achieved. People who strive for ideal goals adopt a *promotion focus*. They eagerly pursue gains and avoid non-gains, are willing to take risks to

achieve their desired outcome and they experience elation when they reach their goal and dejection when they do not. In contrast, people striving for ought goals adopt a *prevention focus* as they pursue non-losses and avoid losses, and are cautious and vigilant to prevent the undesired outcome. They experience quiescence when they reach their desired end state and agitation when they do not. Thus, Regulatory Focus Theory informs us on the motivational inclinations that people employ to pursue specific end states that are construed as ideal vs. ought goals (Higgins, 1996, 1997). It also specifies between cognitive as well as emotional indicators of both foci.

In the context of the present research, goal achievement through prevention focus is particularly relevant. Activation of prevention focus strongly motivates people to prevent negative outcomes. They are prepared to go to great lengths to achieve such goals, because prevention goals are more likely to be considered a necessity (Zaal, Laar, Ståhl, Ellemers, & Derks, 2011). Thus, this focus elicits strong negative feelings when prevention goals are thwarted, and can even result in risky or destructive behavior (Sassenberg & Hansen, 2007; Scholer, Zou, Fujita, Stroessner, & Higgins, 2010). We argue that in the context of a conflict, a prevention focus should elicit behavior aiming to prevent conflict escalation. Demonstrating obliging or cooperative behavior is a safe way to avoid an overt confrontation, because it shows good will and is more likely to be reciprocated with cooperation compared to competitive or dominating behavior. However, once the tension reaches a point where threat becomes imminent, people with strong prevention focus would be inclined to do whatever it takes to limit the negative consequences, even by lashing out (see also Keller, Hurst, & Uskul, 2008; Sassenberg & Hansen, 2007; Zaal, et al., 2011).

Only a few scholars to date have addressed the link between regulatory focus theory and cultural values, so that empirical evidence supporting our reasoning is scarce (see also Hamamura, Meijer, Heine, Kamaya, & Hori, 2009;

Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000). Nevertheless, considering the particular concerns associated with the maintenance and protection of honor, our central hypothesis is that those who endorse honor to a greater extent will also be more prevention focused, especially in situation where honor is under threat, such as during an emerging conflict. That is, as honor seems a necessary commodity that is hard to gain but easy to lose, we expect that concerns for honor will prompt a prevention focus (the primary goal being maintaining honor and avoiding the loss of honor) during conflicts. In the present research, we investigate how honor relates to regulatory focus, emotions, and behaviors in different types of escalatory situations. By doing so, we hope to clarify why people who are concerned with honor react so differently in non-offensive and offensive situations.

We emphasize that our reasoning applies to possibly offensive situations in particular. Indeed we do not wish to suggest that honor always instigates prevention focus. While honor concerns can certainly raise promotion goals, we argue that the salience of honor is relatively likely to raise a preoccupation with prevention of loss of honor especially in potentially offensive social interactions.

Present research

In three studies, we examined the predicted link between honor concerns and prevention focus, and how this impacts on emotions and behavior in different stages of conflict escalation. In a first exploratory study, we compared individuals from an honor-culture to individuals from a non-honor culture to relate cultural differences in honor endorsement to regulatory focus preferences. In the second study, we examined how honor affects initial approaches to possibly escalatory situations. We connected the salience of honor to emotions and conflict intentions to examine responses in a setting that had the potential to escalate but had not escalated yet. In the third study, we immersed participants in an escalatory situation to assess resulting emotions and behavioral indicators

of aggression (administration of white noise). By separating responses to pre-offensive situations from those to explicitly offensive interactions, we aim to shed light on the process of conflict development and reveal whether the same underlying mechanisms could account for different responses in each phase.

Study 4.1

In the first study we assessed honor-related differences in regulatory focus among a community sample of honor culture and non-honor culture members. We hypothesized that participants from an honor culture should endorse honor concerns to a greater extent than non-honor culture participants. We also expected honor-culture members to subscribe to prevention focus goals more than non-honor culture members and that honor concerns would relate to prevention focus, but we did not expect any differences on promotion focus.

Participants and Design

Participants were recruited in public spaces around Leiden Central Station in The Netherlands to take part in a larger general web survey on cultural differences in conflict behavior. In order to do so, they wrote down their email address and the link to the online survey website was emailed to them. A total of 186 participants took part in the survey, but only 128 participants fully completed the survey (68.8%). For the purpose of the current study we only analyzed the responses of participants that could clearly be classified as representatives of a low-honor or high-honor culture group. Participants from Middle Eastern (e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran; n = 8; 8 %) or Mediterranean (e.g., Turkey and Morocco; n = 34; 34,4 %) origin were classified as high-honor. Dutch participants (n = 57; 57.6 %) constituted the low-honor group. It is common practice to use this group as a control sample when examining honor concerns (IJzerman & Cohen, 2011; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a, 2002b). This procedure resulted in ninety-nine participants whose further response could be

related to honor concerns. Honor vs. non-honor participants did not differ in terms of age (*M* = 24.18, *SD* = 7.62) and gender (Female N = 64; 64,6 %). We employed a between-participants design, comparing high-honor culture participants to low-honor culture participants.

Procedure

Participants were briefed about the goal of the survey and consented to voluntary participation. They were also informed that those who completed the full survey, could contend in a lottery to obtain one of five gift certificates worth €50, -. Winners were contacted via email and the gift certificates were mailed to them. The measures of interest for this study (except for demographics) were gathered at the beginning and thus they were not influenced by the content of the survey. All items were measured using seven point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*).

Measures

Honor concerns. Honor concerns were measured by a truncated version of the family honor concerns scale (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). This scale consisted of three items (α = .76) and measured concerns for the central domain of family honor. For example, an item in this honor domain was: *To what extent would it harm your self-worth if you were known as someone who is not able to protect your family's reputation*[9].

[9] In all three studies, we also included three other honor domains (social integrity, masculine honor, and feminine honor). In general, the effects for these domains were not as strong and as consistent as those on the family honor domain. This in line with previous research on honor concerns indicating that particularly the concern for family honor distinguishes non-honor cultures such as the Netherlands from honor cultures in Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean countries (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2012; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a, 2002b). Additional results concerning other honor domains are available upon request.

Regulatory focus. Prevention focus (*I do not take risks often, security is a core criterion I care for* and *I always follow rules and regulations,* $\alpha = .57$) and promotion focus (e.g., *For me the big picture is more important than the details, If I really want to achieve a goal, I'll find a way* and *I like trying out new things,* ($\alpha = .24$) were assessed with three items derived from a recent measure developed by Sassenberg and colleagues (Sassenberg, Ellemers, & Scheepers, 2012).

Results

Honor concerns. Analysis of variance of the honor concerns scale yielded a significant culture effect, $F(1, 97) = 15.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$. Participants in the high-honor cultural group indeed reported being more concerned about their honor ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.10$) than participants in the low-honor cultural group ($M = 4.84$, $SD = .75$).

Regulatory focus. Results of an ANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference in the amount of prevention focus reported, $F(1, 97) = 4.70$, $p = .033$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. These results indicate that as expected, high-honor culture participants ($M = 5.23$, $SD = .88$) were more prevention-focused than low-honor culture members ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.05$). There was no difference between the two groups on the promotion focus measure (high honor $M = 4.90$, $SD = .89$; low honor $M = 4.90$, $SD = .93$; $F < 1$).

Honor and regulatory focus. We assessed the direct relationship between honor concerns and regulatory focus. For that purpose we calculated the correlations between honor concerns and the two regulatory foci separately. Results indicated that honor concerns were positively correlated with prevention focus ($r = .27$, $p = .007$), while the correlation between honor concerns and promotion focus was not significant ($r = .14$, *n.s.*). As predicted, these results indicate that higher levels of honor concerns are associated with higher levels of prevention focus, but not necessarily different levels of promotion focus.

Discussion

Results of this first study offer preliminary evidence in line with our reasoning. Participants from an honor culture reported more prevention focus, confirming our hypothesis that honor is associated with prevention focus. Interestingly, honor concerns correlated with prevention focus but not with promotion focus, but this might also be due to the fact that the honor concern items were formulated in terms of undesirable outcomes. In general, the outcomes are in line with the idea that, on a cultural level, honor concerns are associated with a heightened prevention focus.

One limitation of this study however, was the low internal consistency of the regulatory focus measures, particularly for promotion focus. This measure has been validated in previous research (Sassenberg, et al., 2012). However, our decision to use a truncated form to keep the length of the survey to an acceptable level for a community sample, might have diminished the scale's internal consistency. Therefore, we used alternative scales to measure regulatory focus in Study 4.2.

Furthermore, although comparing cultural groups in a community sample allows for a comparison with high ‘face validity’, it is difficult to rule out the contribution of other possible factors (e.g., language deficiency or societal status of minority groups). Therefore, in studies 2 and 3 we used an experimental manipulation to make honor concerns more salient within participants from a similar cultural background in order to exclude other cultural differences as possible explanatory factors and to validate our causal predictions. To our knowledge, this is a new method in honor research which allows us to eliminate confounding aspects of cultural differences that are not honor related (see also IJzerman & Cohen, 2011; Leung & Cohen, 2011).

Study 4.2

In Study 4.2, we set out to investigate the connection between honor concerns, emotional responses, and behavioral inclinations in a situation which has the potential to escalate but has not escalated yet. In this study, we only selected non-honor culture members of Dutch origin. Because the Netherlands is known as a prototypically Western and individualistic culture the Dutch seem to embrace the ideal of *dignity* rather than honor (IJzerman & Cohen, 2011). Dignity pertains to someone's internally defined worth, something that cannot be taken away by others (IJzerman & Cohen, 2011; Leung & Cohen, 2011). Within dignity cultures, honor concerns are generally less salient. Nevertheless, research has shown that the notion of honor does exist in such cultures and may be activated under certain circumstances (Beersma, et al., 2003; IJzerman, et al., 2007; Shafa, Harinck, Ellemers, & Beersma, 2014). We take advantage of this possibility by making honor concerns more salient using an experimental manipulation, to pinpoint the psychological implications of honor concerns while ruling out other cultural artifacts.

We assessed how participants with experimentally induced honor concerns would approach a possibly escalatory situation and we considered the role of prevention focus in this process. We expected that high-honor participants would adopt a more de-escalatory approach to a possibly escalatory situation, particularly if the possibility of escalation is implicit rather than explicit. We also expected prevention focus to mediate this effect.

Participants

Ninety students of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Leiden University participated in this study. After first inspection of the data, 11 participants were identified as having an ethnic background associated with an honor culture. To maintain the cultural homogeneity of our sample and prevent confounding effects of different cultural backgrounds on the honor manipulation, they were

excluded from analysis. Additionally, five participants were excluded from analysis because they did not comply with the instructions of the experimental manipulation. The final dataset consisted of seventy-four non-honor culture participants (56 female, 75.7 %, M_{age} = 20.85, SD_{age} = 3.37). Gender and age were equally distributed among conditions.

Design

The study had a 2 (honor condition: low honor vs. high honor) by 2 (response condition: explicit escalation vs. implicit escalation) factorial design and was conducted using a paper and pencil survey and conflict scenarios.

Materials and Procedure

This study was part of a series of unrelated lab experiments. After consenting, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and received a booklet containing the questionnaire. All measures were assessed using seven point scales, unless stated otherwise.

Honor manipulation. The first part of the survey consisted of a manipulation to activate low honor vs. high honor in participants (see Appendix 4.1). According to theory, the value of people in an honor culture is 1) based on the personal adherence to the honor code and 2) depends on their social value in the eyes of others (Beersma, et al., 2003; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). The manipulation was developed to capture both these aspects of honor concerns. To this effect, we first asked participants to indicate their agreement with a series of honor code related statements. To make honor more or less salient, the items were identical in content across the conditions, but phrased in such a way that participants would be inclined to indicate agreement (high-honor) or disagreement (low-honor) depending on the experimental condition ('leading questionnaire', see also Libby & Eibach, 2002). For example, in the high-honor condition, statements were formulated moderately, such as *Values such as honor and respect are important*. This statement should elicit some

agreement even among non-honor culture participants. Conversely, the same statement was formulated very extremely in the low-honor condition as *Values such as honor and respect are more important than the law*, which should elicit general disagreement among non-honor culture participants. Thus, by phrasing honor statements such that participants would be inclined to endorse or reject them, we intended to activate or deactivate their endorsement of the honor code.

The second step of the manipulation aimed to activate or deactivate socially conferred worth in participants (Lee, et al., 2000). Participants in the high-honor condition were asked to think about a situation in which their primary concern was to maintain a positive social image. Participants in the low-honor condition were asked to recollect a personal situation in which it was very important to them to maintain a positive self-image. Participants were instructed to describe the situation and explain why it was important for them to maintain their reputation or self-image. In summary, 1) elicited ag*reement with honor statements* and 2) a focus on *reputation* were used to *activate honor concerns*. On the other hand 1) elicited *disagreement with honor statements* and 2) a focus on *self-image* were used to suppress *honor concerns* .[10]

We note that both elements are part of this manipulation to reflect the consequence of honor concerns in full. Thus, we did not aim to establish their

[10] In both Study 4.2 and 4.3, participants in the high-honor condition indeed tended to agree with the moderate honor statements (means between 5 and 6), while participants in the low-honor condition mostly disagreed with the extreme honor-statements (means between 2 and 3; *p*s < .001). The reported situations in response to the open manipulation questions in both studies concerned mostly academic performance or relational struggles. However, as instructed, in the high-honor condition, people reported concerns in terms of social pressure (appearing competent, impressing colleagues or parents, maintain 'playboy' reputation); while in the low honor-condition, concerns were related to maintaining a positive self-image (maintaining confident, being perseverant, not becoming insecure)

separate effects in this study. Additionally, there is little construct validity in separating the two steps. Emphasizing socially conferred worth without the honor statements may also activate 'face' ideals (Leung & Cohen, 2011), while only eliciting agreement with honor statements would not activate honor as effectively if socially conferred worth was not made salient.

Vignettes and response manipulation. In the next part of the survey, participants read a description of an argument. We randomly assigned all participants to one of two different versions to make sure our findings were not restricted to one particular conflict situation. Half of the participants were asked to imagine getting into an argument with a neighbor, who made noise playing a musical instrument while they were studying. The other half of the participants were invited to imagine getting into an argument with a fellow student who had not completed his/her part of an assignment while the deadline was approaching. After reading the scenario, we measured participants' regulatory strategy to deal with the situation (Sassenberg, Jonas, Shah, & Brazy, 2007).

We then introduced the response manipulation. In the scenario involving the noisy neighbor, the neighbor's alleged response was: "*Why don't you go study in the library?"* in the implicit escalation condition. In the explicit escalation condition the same response was presented, followed by the insult "*sourpuss"* ("*zeurpiet*" in Dutch). In the student scenario, the student allegedly responded: "*I thought we were supposed do this together."* in the implicit escalation condition. In the explicit escalation condition, the same response was presented, followed by the insult *"backstabber"* ("*matennaaier*" in Dutch).

Directly after reading this response we assessed management intentions and the perceived offensiveness of the response. Next, we assessed participants' regulatory focus after the opponent's response by asking them to indicate to what extent they experienced emotions associated with prevention and promotion focus (Higgins, 1997; Shah & Higgins, 2001). Finally, we assessed

the effectiveness of the honor manipulation with the honor concerns scale and collected demographics (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). Participants were then debriefed, thanked, and rewarded course credit for their cooperation.

Measures

Honor manipulation check. For reasons discussed in Study 4.1 and in order to be consistent over the three studies, we focused on the same three-item scale as in Study 4.1 (α = .79), to assess the effectiveness of the honor manipulation (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b).

Regulatory strategy. We asked participants which strategy they were likely to adopt in such a situation, using the Regulatory Strategy scale (Sassenberg, et al., 2007) with five bipolar items measured on nine-point scales (α = .68). Each item was represented by a promotion focus strategy at one end and a prevention focus strategy at the other end (e.g., 1 = *take risks,* 9 = *be cautious* or *1 = go for security, 9 = go for success* (r)). The closer a participant's score to the promotion end of the scale, the higher their reported inclination towards promotion strategy and vice versa. The midpoint of the scale indicated that participants did not prefer one type of regulatory strategy over the other. Items were recoded so that higher scores always indicated a stronger preference for prevention strategies.

Response manipulation check. Three items were used to test the effectiveness of the response manipulation (α = .68). These items measured to what extent participants would be offended, experienced conflict, and experienced disagreement after their opponent's response.

Conflict management. We used the DUTCH (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001) to assess participants' conflict management intentions. This questionnaire measures the preference for the conflict management strategies of avoiding (e.g., *I avoid a confrontation on our disagreement,* α = .68), dominating (e.g., *I pursue my own goal,* α = .79), compromising (e.g., *I*

insist on compromising, α = .80), integrating (e.g., *I work towards a solution that serves both our purposes,* α = .82), and accommodating (e.g., *I try to accommodate my opponent,* α = .81). Each subscale consists of four items (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*).

Regulatory emotions focus emotions after response. We measured emotions associated with regulatory focus using four items per focus. Participants were asked to what extent they would experience each emotion in the given situation (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). The prevention focus emotions were *calm(r), at ease(r), nervous,* and *agitated* (α = .80). The promotion focus emotions were *content(r), joyful(r), discouraged,* and *upset* (α = .61). Because the emotions pertained to a possibly offensive and therefore negative context, items were recoded as such that higher scores indicated more negative emotional response[11].

Results

Controlling for the type of conflict scenario participants received did not affect any of the results reported below. Therefore, data were collapsed across the two scenarios for further analysis. We performed ANOVAs on all dependent variables with honor condition and response condition as independent variables, unless stated otherwise.

Honor manipulation check. There was only a significant effect of honor condition on activation of honor concerns, $F(1, 70) = 4.41$, $p = .039$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. Participants in the high-honor condition reported having significantly higher honor concerns ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.38$) than participants in the low-honor

[11] A factor analysis for all eight emotion items resulted in two factors separating the positive valence items from the negative valence items. However, a factor analysis for the positive valence and negative valence items separately clustered the promotion emotions into one category and the prevention emotions into another for both the positively-valenced and the negatively-valenced items. This was the case for both Study 4.2 and 4.3.

condition (M = 4.13, SD = 1.23); the honor manipulation thus proved to be effective. No other effects were significant (Fs < 1.68, ps > .21)

Regulatory strategy. After reading the scenario, but before reading their opponent's response, participants were asked to report their initial regulatory strategy to deal with the conflict at hand. There was a significant main effect of honor condition on regulatory strategy, $F(1, 70) = 6.29$, $p = .014$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. Participants in the high honor condition (M = 5.12, SD = 1.34) reported a stronger inclination to adopt a prevention strategy than participants in the low honor condition (M = 4.35, SD = 1.28). The main effect for response condition and the honor by response interaction were not significant (Fs <1). These results also exclude possible pre-existing regulatory strategy differences in the response conditions before the opponent's response.

Response manipulation check. There was a main effect of response on this measure $F(1, 70) = 7.27$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. Participants in the explicit escalation condition took more offense to the conflict (M = 5.24, SD = 1.02) than participants in the implicit escalation condition (M = 4.65, SD = 1.06). The main effect of honor condition and the honor by response interaction were not significant (Fs < 1). These findings confirm that, as intended, participants in both honor conditions considered the explicit response to be more offensive than the implicit response.

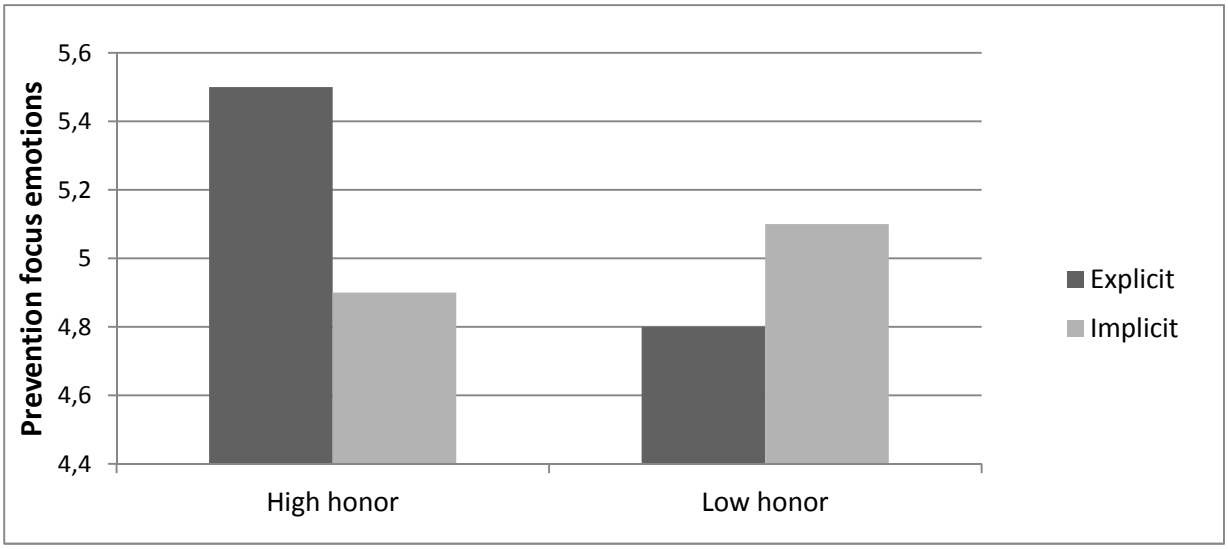
Conflict management. We only found significant main effects for honor condition on the accommodating and dominating conflict strategies. Participants in the high-honor condition reported more accommodating conflict intentions (M = 3.64, SD = 1.16) than participants in the low-honor condition (M = 3.01, SD = 1.21), $F(1, 70) = 3.98$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Additionally, participants in the high-honor condition reported less dominating conflict intentions (M = 3.43, SD = 1.06) than participants in the low-honor condition (M = 4.09, SD = 1.19), $F(1, 70) = 5.79$, $p = .019$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. These results are in line with the reported

regulatory strategy and indicate that in general, participants in the high-honor group favored a more accommodating and less dominating conflict strategy. No other effects were significant (Fs < 2.48, ps > .12)

Mediating effect of regulatory strategy. We then assessed the mediating effect of regulatory strategy on the accommodating and dominating conflict strategies, using bootstrapping (1000 samples) as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2004), with honor condition as predictor and regulatory strategy as mediator. Regulatory strategy mediated the effect of honor on accommodating conflict strategies (point estimate of .16, p = .02, 95% CI = .01 - .52) significantly, rendering the original effect of honor on accommodating conflict styles non-significant (p = .13). Regulatory strategy did not mediate the effect of honor condition on the dominating conflict intentions because regulatory strategy did not correlate significantly with this conflict handling style.

Figure 4.1

Honor by insult interaction effect on prevention focus emotions



Regulatory focus emotions after response. There was a marginally significant interaction effect of honor and response type on prevention focus

emotions, $F(1,70) = 3.83$, $p = .054$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Simple effect analyses revealed that prevention focus emotions were higher among high-honor participants than low-honor participants in the explicit escalation condition, $F(1,70) = 5.07$, $p = .027$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, (Figure 4.1), but equal among high honor and low honor participants in the implicit condition, $F = .265$, ns. Thus the explicit response led to more prevention focus emotions, but only in the high-honor condition. As in Study 4.1, there were no significant effects of experimental manipulation on promotion focus emotions. Means (*SD*) for the promotion focus emotions were $M = 5.48$ (.72) in the high-honor condition and $M = 5.56$ (.70) in the low-honor condition. None of the other effects were significant (Fs < 1.51, ps > .22).

Discussion

In the second study, we effectively manipulated participants' honor concerns within a single cultural setting to disentangle honor concerns from other possible cultural differences. We then assessed participant's regulatory strategy in a possibly escalatory situation. Results revealed that activated honor concerns elicited the adoption of prevention strategies. In line with previous work on honor and conflict management (Beersma, et al., 2003; Harinck, et al., 2013), results of this study also showed that those high in honor initially favored a more de-escalatory approach (more accommodating and less dominating tactics) to deal with a possibly escalatory situation.

The current findings add to this work by elucidating the underlying psychological mechanism, since the difference on the accommodating conflict management style was mediated by high honor participants' tendency to adopt a prevention strategy to deal with the situation. Interestingly, we also observed higher levels of prevention focus emotions after the explicit response among those with high honor concerns than those with low honor concerns. This difference was not found in the implicit escalation condition, indicating that the

focus on preventing undesired outcomes becomes even more intensified when possible conflict escalation is more explicit.

We did not find the expected interaction effect indicating more forceful conflict intentions among those high in honor after a disparaging comment was made. Possibly, the negative remark was not strong enough to be highly offensive. According to recent findings, a mild slight is not likely to elicit a hostile response even among those from an honor culture (Cross, et al., 2013).

The current findings are a first step in better understanding the motivations underlying the processes of escalatory vs. de-escalatory behavior among those high in honor. Results point out that when honor concerns are high people initially favor a more de-escalatory approach to a possibly conflictual situation because they want to prevent undesirable outcomes, i.e. conflict escalation and the possible loss of one's honor. Notably, the reported effects were found on two different measures of regulatory focus, across two different conflict scenarios, and both before and after the opponent's response, thereby validating our findings beyond one particular setting.

Study 4.3

Results of Study 4.2 demonstrated that, when honor concerns are salient, the initial approach to a possibly escalatory situation is more likely de-escalatory than when honor is not salient. In Study 4.3 we set out to examine the dynamics of conflict escalation and to identify whether higher levels of aggression are driven by the same mechanism that drives de-escalatory behavior in the earlier stages of conflict. Therefore, in our third study we exposed participants to a more immersive situation in an interactive experiment with multiple insults and actual indicators of aggression. We contrasted responses to insulting feedback with responses to critical but non-insulting feedback as well as with a control condition with neutral feedback. The purpose of this design was to distinguish the effect of insulting feedback from the effect of general negative evaluations.

Because insults are especially harmful for a person's honor (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b), we predicted that when honor concerns were activated, participants would respond particularly aggressively to an insult and less so towards general (non-insulting) negative or neutral feedback. On the other hand, when honor concerns were deactivated, participants would consider negative and insulting feedback both as equally negative, and thus respond with equal levels of aggression, but more so than when receiving neutral feedback.

Participants

A total of 136 students were recruited at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Leiden University to participate in this study. An inspection of the demographic information revealed that eight participants originated from an honor culture. They were excluded from the analysis because of confounding effects of their cultural background with the honor manipulation. Additionally, six more participants were excluded because they expressed explicit suspicion about being paired with an actual participant. Thus, the final data set consisted of 122 participants (89 female, 73 %, M_{age} = 20.81, SD_{age} = 4.32). Gender and age were equally distributed among all four experimental conditions.

Design

This experiment had a 2 (honor condition: low honor vs. high honor) by 3 (feedback condition: neutral vs. negative vs. insulting) between subject design.

Procedure

After consenting, participants took place in a cubicle in the lab and were randomly assigned to one of six conditions. The cover story of this experiment was that participants were taking part in an experiment investigating digital cooperation, for example over email or instant messaging. They were told that they would be randomly paired to another participant, perform two tasks together and answer questions about their performance. We then followed a

similar procedure as in Study 4.2 to manipulate participants' honor concerns, using the two-stepped manipulation.

Task 1: feedback. After the honor manipulation participants performed two 'cooperation' tasks. The first task was a word game during which participants received either neutral, or negative, or insulting feedback about their performance, supposedly from a participant they were randomly paired with. In this task Participant A had to solve ten consecutive word puzzles and send the answers to Participant B. Participant B then used those answers as hints to answer the questions s/he had received. This game was played on three rounds. Participants were told that, in order to replicate the limitations of digital communication, Participant A could only communicate to Participant B by forwarding his or her answers to Participants B. Participant B could only communicate to Participant A by sending feedback to Participant A two times during each series of word puzzles. They were told that assignment to be either Participant A or B was random. However, participants were in fact playing against the computer. All participants were assigned to be Participant A, solve the word puzzles and be on the receiving end of feedback. This cover story was created to have participants believe they were actually working with someone else on a task and to have a credible reason for why they only received (insulting) feedback but were not able to give feedback.

During each series of ten word puzzles participants received feedback twice, adding up to a total of six times. In all feedback conditions, the first and third instances of feedback were task related and similar, indicating what the question was Participant B had to answer. In the remaining instances, participants received either neutral feedback (e.g., "*Are you managing?*"), or negative feedback (e.g., "*This is of no use to me.*") or insulting feedback (e.g., "*You're turning this into a fucking mess.*"). The offensiveness of the feedback was assessed in a pilot study.

Task 2: white noise. The amount of aggression participants displayed was measured during the second task of the study. This task, the Competitive Reaction time Task (CRT; Meier, et al., 2006; Taylor, 1967), followed directly after the first task and was ostensibly performed with the same collaborator. Effectively, in this task participants are able to select the intensity of noise they want to administer to their opponent through a headphone (dB 60 – dB 105) over 25 trials. This task has been validated as a direct measure of aggression in previous studies (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Meier, et al., 2006). We specifically chose this task because it gives a clear indication of the process of escalation as the result of repeated exchanges of aggression over time. We followed the same procedure as outlined by Meier and colleagues (Meier, et al., 2006).

Next, we assessed participants' regulatory-focus-related emotions and the effectiveness of the honor manipulation. To probe for suspicion about the procedure, we included an open-ended question where participants were invited to freely comment on their counterpart and the cooperation tasks. Participants who indicated doubting the credibility of their counterpart were excluded from analysis. Next, participants' demographics were gathered. Finally, participants were debriefed about the actual goal and procedure of the study and rewarded with either course credits or € 3, - for their cooperation.

Measures

Honor manipulation check. For reasons discussed in Study 4.1 and in order to be consistent, we used the same three-item scale as in the previous two studies to assess the effectiveness of the honor manipulation ($\alpha = .78$).

Noise level. The first noise burst administered usually conveys the initial level of aggression, while the level of noise set during the remaining 24 trials indicates the level of aggression displayed by participants in response to the following interaction during the course of the CRT (Bushman & Baumeister,

1998). Therefore, we analyzed the mean noise levels set by participants during the first round and throughout the 24 consecutive rounds as separate indicators of aggression. Both indicators varied between dB 60 (normal conversation level) and dB 105 (fighter jet at 500 feet). In some studies, participants also have the option of selecting zero dB of white noise in case they do not want to administer any white noise at all (Meier, et al., 2006). In our design the minimum level of noise that could be selected was 60 dB. To assess the amount of aggression displayed, we only included responses of those participants who at least once set the noise level above the bare minimum of 60dB[12].

Regulatory focus emotions. We used the same items as in Study 4.2 to measure promotion focus emotions ($\alpha = .83$) and prevention focus emotions ($\alpha = .85$). Although these emotions were measured after the supposed cooperation tasks, we specifically asked participants to what extent they had experienced these emotions during the tasks.

Results

Honor manipulation check. An ANOVA with honor condition and feedback condition as independent variables on the honor concerns scale confirmed the effectiveness of the honor manipulation. Participants in the high-honor condition reported having significantly more honor concerns ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.06$) than participants in the low-honor condition ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.32$); $F(1, 116) = 6.67$, $p = .011$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. As intended, the main effect of the feedback condition and the honor by feedback interaction effect were not significant (Fs < 1.43, ps > .25).

[12] Analysis of the results including the 19 participants (9 in the high-honor condition), who did not administer any white noise above the minimum 60 dB level revealed similar outcomes, though the contrast effect on white noise in the honor condition (insult vs. negative and neutral feedback) was no longer significant $F(1, 57) = 1.70$, $p = .19$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$.

Noise level. Because of our specific predictions regarding honor-related responses, we assessed à priori interaction contrasts, comparing the insult condition to the negative and neutral feedback condition in the high-honor group, and comparing the insult and negative feedback condition to the neutral feedback condition in the low-honor group. The average noise levels set in the first and the remaining 24 trials are presented in Table 4.1.

1st trial. We first analyzed the noise level set by participants during the first round of interaction with ANOVA and honor condition and feedback condition as independent variables. Neither the main effects, nor the interaction contrasts were significant (Fs < 1.99, ps > .14). These results seem to suggest that at first, the different kinds of feedback elicit similar kinds of responses in both honor conditions, indicating that the initial levels of aggression displayed are equal.

Table 4.1

Mean dBs of white noise

		1st trial		Remaining 24 trials	
		High-honor	**Low-honor**	**High-honor**	**Low-honor**
Insult	**M**	72.78	75.53	79.92[a]	75.64[a]
	(SD)	(16.99)	(16.40)	(12.27)	(11.78)
Negative	**M**	73.61	70.88	72.19[b]	76.04[a]
	(SD)	(9.20)	(11.35)	(9.78)	(12.05)
Neutral	**M**	69.38	66.33	74.17[b]	70.69[b]
	(SD)	(12.50)	(9.35)	(7.42)	(7.66)

Note. Means within columns with different superscripts differ significantly.

Remaining 24 trials. We then analyzed the average level of noise administered throughout the task using ANOVA with honor condition and feedback condition as independent variables. The main effects of honor and feedback were not significant, although there was an overall trend suggesting that the participants in the insult condition (M = 77.72, SD = 12.05) maintained a heightened level of aggression throughout the task while this was not the case for participants in the neutral feedback condition (M = 72.49, SD = 7.62), $F(2, 97) = 2.34$, $p = .10$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$; LSD Post-hoc $p = .04$. The negative feedback condition (M = 74.06, SD = 10.99) did not differ from the other two conditions.

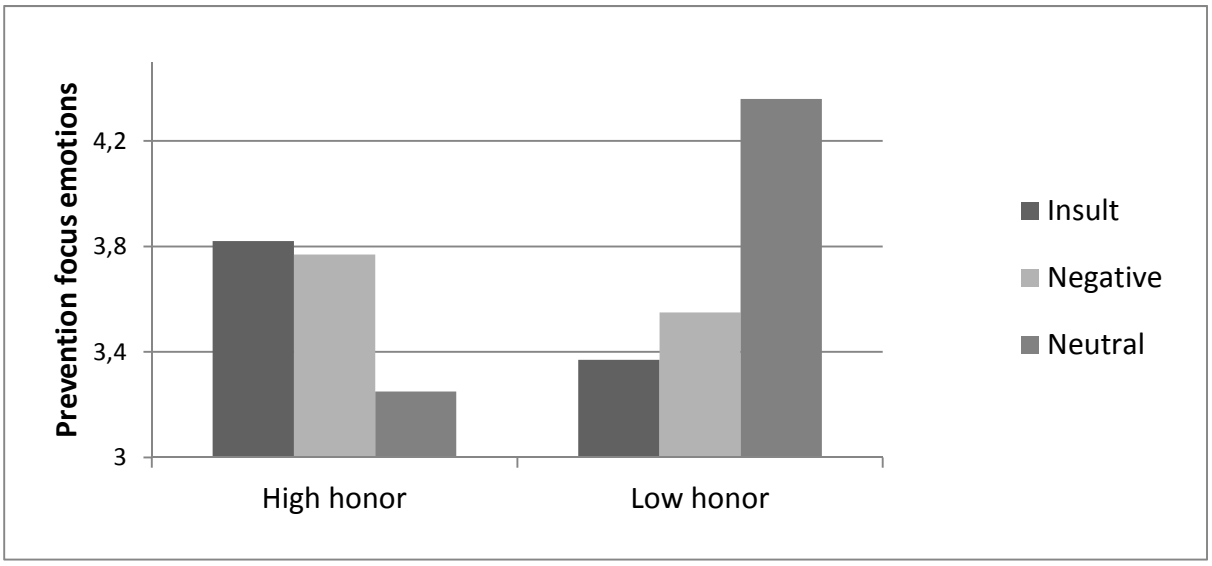
Even though the overall two-way interaction was not significant $F(2, 97) = 1.59$, $p = .21$, we proceeded by assessing the predicted honor by feedback interaction because we had specified a predicted pattern of mean differences in which specific conditions should deviate from the overall pattern. The results of this analysis was consistent with our hypotheses. Most clearly, in the high-honor group the predicted contrast was significant, indicating that those in the insult condition administered significantly higher levels of white noise than those in the negative feedback condition and in the neutral feedback condition, $F(1, 48) = 5.18$, $p = .027$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, (see Table 4.1). In the low-honor condition there was a trend towards our hypothesized outcome, indicating that participants in the insult and negative feedback condition selected higher levels of noise than participants in the neutral feedback conditions, $F(1, 47) = 2.92$, $p = .094$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$.

Regulatory focus emotions. We used ANOVAs to assess differences on the prevention focus and promotion focus emotions with honor condition and insult condition as independent variables. As expected and in line with findings in Study 4.2, only the interaction effect of honor by feedback condition on prevention focus emotions was significant $F(2, 116) = 4.82$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. In the high-honor condition the insulting or negative feedback instigated more

prevention-focus emotions, while in the low-honor condition the neutral feedback instigated more prevention-focus emotions (see Figure 4.2). Simple effect analyses revealed that this effect was particularly driven by differences in the neutral feedback condition $F(1, 116) = 8.18$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. There were no other significant effects on the prevention focus emotions, nor any significant effects on the promotion focus emotions (all Fs < 1). Means (SD) for the promotion focus emotions were $M = 3.32$ (1.12) in the high-honor condition and $M = 3.45$ (1.17) in the low-honor condition.

Figure 4.2

Honor by feedback interaction effect on prevention focus emotion



We also analyzed the correlations between regulatory focus emotions and the white noise intensity set by participants in the high and low-honor condition separately (see Table 4.2). Interestingly, we found different correlations for the two conditions. While promotion focus (but not prevention focus) was positively and significantly correlated with the noise level set by participants in the low-honor condition ($r = .29$, $p = .045$), prevention focus (but not promotion focus)

was positively and marginally correlated with noise levels set by participants in the high-honor condition (r = .25, p = .074).

Table 4.2

Correlations between regulatory focus and level of white noise per honor condition

	High honor		Low honor	
	1st trial	**Average**	**1st trial**	**Average**
Prevention emotions	.15	.25^{+}	.06	03
Promotion emotions	.08	.16	.07	.29*

Note. n = 61 in each honor condition, * $p < .05$; $^{+}$ $p < .1$ (two sided)

Discussion

In this third study, we manipulated both honor concerns and type of feedback in a fully experimental setting and measured actual behavior. Our results replicated those of the previous study, indicating that our honor manipulation successfully activated honor concerns even among participants in a non-honor culture setting.

We used a previously validated aggression measure, that is, administering white noise (Meier, et al., 2006; Taylor, 1967), to determine participants' hostility when interacting with a supposed fellow participant, who had given them insulting, negative, or neutral feedback during a previous task. As hypothesized, we demonstrated that particularly those whose honor concerns were activated reacted more aggressively to insulting feedback than to negative or neutral feedback. Those whose honor concerns were deactivated reacted equally aggressive to both insulting and negative feedback, but displayed more aggression in these conditions than after neutral feedback. Additionally, the

display of higher levels of aggression did not become apparent in the initial responses to the insulting feedback, but after multiple rounds of interaction in which different levels of white noise were exchanged.

The results pertaining to regulatory focus partially corroborated our previous findings. As expected, in the high-honor condition prevention focus emotions were higher in the insulting and negative feedback condition and lower for the neutral condition while this pattern was reversed in the low-honor condition. Additionally, in the high-honor group aggressive responses were significantly correlated with prevention focus emotions, while in the low-honor condition aggression was significantly correlated with promotion focus emotions. These findings suggest that different motivational processes drive responses to insulting feedback when honor concerns are salient or not.

General discussion

In three studies we examined the relation between honor, regulatory focus, and responses to different types of feedback, distinguishing insulting feedback from general negative or neutral feedback. Across three studies we found support for the notion that, particularly in a setting that poses a possible threat to one's social image, honor endorsement is associated with prevention focus. We showed that those high in honor reported higher overall levels of prevention focus, reported higher levels of prevention strategies before engaging in conflict, and reported higher levels of prevention focus emotions after an explicit confrontation, compared to those low in honor. Moreover, we found that among those high in honor prevention focus was associated with initial de-escalatory tactics to deal with a situation in Study 4.2, while it was also associated with aggressive responses to insulting feedback in an open confrontation in Study 4.3.

In sum, when honor concerns are at play, conflict development and escalation consist of two distinct steps. While initial reactions to tensions tend to

be cooperative and obliging to avoid further escalation, responses can become quite hostile after a certain threshold is exceeded (see also Cohen, et al., 1999). Furthermore, we provide initial empirical evidence that the activation of prevention focus constitutes one of the underlying psychological mechanisms that can account for this dynamic. In Study 4.2, the activation of prevention focus strategies mediated the relation between honor activation and accommodating conflict intentions in a situation that had not yet escalated. However, in a more overt and escalatory context, such as in Study 4.3, prevention focus emotions among high-honor participants were correlated to more aggressive reactions to insulting feedback.

These findings have important theoretical implications. To our knowledge, these findings are among the first to connect prevention focus with honor and (defensive) aggression to social devaluations. More specifically, our results provide a possible explanation for seemingly contradictory findings that have been reported in previous research on the relation between honor and cooperative vs. aggressive reactions in a possibly escalatory setting. It seems both types of reactions are prevalent and they are driven by the same underlying motivational considerations, that is to either prevent a possibly honor threatening situation or to restore one's honor one's it has been harmed. As such, these findings contribute to a better understanding of how cultural values, such as honor, affect interpersonal (and probably intergroup) interactions.

Our findings also have important practical implications relevant to the field of intergroup communication and intercultural conflict management. In line with previous research (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996; Harinck, et al., 2013), we found that among those high in honor, there is a considerable difference between the initial approach to possibly insulting situations and reactions to the factual experience of insults. We demonstrate that two different processes might be in operation before and during conflict escalation when

honor is at stake. De-escalatory tactics are adopted at first, but can be followed up by more vigorous responses when the confrontation becomes more explicit and overt. However, there is a risk that people do not correctly detect or interpret these signals during the interaction. Obliging behavior can be misinterpreted as a sign that all is well, while in fact it communicates vigilance. On the other hand, aggression can be interpreted as competitiveness, while in fact it communicates the need to repair one's honor.

This knowledge also means that different interventions tailored to specific stages of conflict might be necessary. For example, affirmation tactics might work in order to prevent loss of honor due to insults in the initial stages of a confrontation and advance constructive competition. However, these interventions probably become useless once conflict has escalated. When this is the case, other measures, such as apologies or penalties by a third party might be more effective to reduce the need for personal retribution. As societies become more and more diverse, and people with different cultural backgrounds meet on a day-to-day basis, understanding their perspective in these situations and predicting their responses as interaction unfolds can help prevent or reduce tensions.

A strength of the current set of studies is that we employed a multi-method approach. In Study 4.1, we used correlational data to compare participants from honor vs. non-honor cultures, while in Study 4.2 and 4.3 honor concerns were experimentally manipulated. Additionally, we used a variety of measures to capture cognitive as well as emotional aspects of regulatory focus. Our dependent measures included self-reports as well as behavioral indicators, enabling us to capture subjective interpretations of the situation and actual reactions.

Notably, we used a newly developed honor manipulation. This manipulation did not only activate honor concerns on a cognitive and emotional

level, but also affected behavior that has been previously linked to culture-based honor endorsement. By using this manipulation within one single cultural group, we were able to separate the effect of honor concerns from other cultural factors. As a result we were able to uncover the underlying psychological mechanisms directly pertaining to honor concerns.

One important limitation however, is that it proved difficult to measure situational variations in regulatory focus following our manipulations by means of the standard measures of regulatory focus. As a result, some of the reported interactions and correlations were weak at best. However, this limitation is common in regulatory focus research (Sassenberg & Woltin, 2008; Summerville & Roese, 2008), as it is difficult to assess situational variances in a subtle indicator such as regulatory focus using self-reports.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our findings highlight that those high in honor initially adopt a more de-escalatory approach to a possible confrontation, but show more aggression once they were actually offended. Additionally, both types of responses are (at least partially) driven by higher levels of prevention focus, or the motivation to prevent an undesirable end-state, the loss of honor.

Appendix 4.1

High honor manipulation

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements

1. Values such as honor and respect are important.
2. I can understand that sometimes people take matters in their own hands when they suffer grievous wrongs.
3. Shame is a useful emotion.
4. It is important that people try and maintain a good reputation.
5. Modesty and courtesy are still important virtues in the current society.
6. I don't want my mistakes to have negative consequences for my family's reputation.
7. I may get worked up when someone insults me intentionally.
8. Making my family proud is important for me.

It is well known that how others think about us greatly affects our self-worth. Think back to a situation where it was important to you to uphold your reputation. Describe that situation and why it was so important to uphold your reputation.

Low honor manipulation

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements

1. Values such as honor and respect are more important than the law.
2. Whenever someone treats me unfairly, I take matters into my own hands.
3. Shame is the most important emotion.
4. People who are not concerned for their reputation do not deserve respect.
5. Modesty and courtesy are the most important virtues in the current society.
6. Every choice I make has direct consequences for the reputation of my family.

7. People will have to answer for the consequences, even in case of the smallest insults.
8. The most important thing is that my family is proud of me.

It is well known that how we think about ourselves strongly affects our self-worth. Think back to a situation where it was important to you to maintain a positive self-image. Describe that situation and why it was so important to maintain a positive self-image.

Chapter 5

In the eyes of others

The role of honor-related self-concerns in explaining and preventing insult-elicited aggression

"*Honor is unstable and seldom the same;*
for she feeds upon opinion, and is as fickle as her food. "
Charles Caleb Colton

This chapter is based on: Shafa, S., Harinck, F., Ellemers, N., & Beersma, B. (*under review*). In the eyes of others: the role of honor-related self-concerns in explaining and preventing insult-elicited aggression.

Abstract

Previous research relating honor concerns to conflict escalation has revealed that people from an honor culture are more sensitive to confrontational or insulting remarks and can respond more aggressively to offences compared to people who are not from an honor culture. To date no substantial attempts have been made to examine whether and how it may be possible to prevent these negative outcomes. We address this gap in the current research. First, a correlational study revealed that insult-elicited confrontation is related to an essential aspect of honor — the relative importance of social approval in defining one's worth. In a second study, we examine the effectiveness of a social affirmation in reducing insult-elicited aggression in an immersive paradigm including real insults and behavioral indicators of aggression. We show that among honor-culture members, a social affirmation is effective in reducing insult-elicited aggression compared to no affirmation at all, while a traditional self-affirmation is not. By doing so, we identify a possible intervention for limiting the negative ramifications of insulting feedback among those from an honor culture.

Previous research examining honor-related differences in the way conflicts develop and escalate has mainly established that insults and provocations elicit more aggressive responses among people who are high in honor (Cohen, et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Van Osch, et al., 2013). At the same time little effort has been made to empirically investigate *why* people high in honor respond more forcefully, or to develop methods that might prevent these negative consequences.

In the current study we aim to identify which self-related concerns are responsible for the heightened sensitivity of people from an honor culture towards insults and how aggression can be prevented. Based on theoretical underpinnings of honor, we distinguish between personal worth — the value of a person in his own eyes — and social worth — the value of a person in the eyes of others. We connect interpersonal differences in social worth to cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to insulting feedback in a scenario study using a correlational design. We will demonstrate that reliance on social approval in defining one's worth makes people vulnerable to (negative) social evaluations such as insults. In a second experimental study, we assess the effectiveness of a social affirmation in reducing insult-elicited aggression among honor-culture participants in an immersive paradigm with real insults and behavioral indicators of aggression. This second study examines whether a social affirmation significantly reduces insult-elicited aggression compared to a control condition, while a personal self-affirmation does not. These findings are not only theoretically relevant for cross-cultural and conflict management researchers. They can also inform practitioners on ways to develop interventions that might prevent, reduce, or resolve conflicts in many day-to-day situations where cultural differences might exacerbate conflicts.

Honor, insults and aggression

Based on seminal work in anthropology (Gilmore, 1987; Peristiany, 1965; Schneider, 1969), social psychologists usually define *honor* as "…the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society" (Pitt-

Rivers, 1965, p. 21). This definition highlights an important aspect of honor, which is the relative importance of other peoples' approval in defining a person's self-worth. Honor is a person's claim to worth, but this worth can only be claimed effectively if it is conferred by others (Gilmore, 1987). Cultures in which members adhere strongly to honor are considered honor cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a). In these cultures, honor norms dictate behavior and people are evaluated according to the extent to which they are perceived to adhere to these norms. As such, the maintenance and protection of one's reputation and social image play an important role in social interactions in honor cultures. Self-worth in honor cultures thus entails both personal worth (a person's value in their own eyes) and social worth (a person's value in the eyes of others)[13].

Honor cultures are found in different parts of the world such as the Middle-East, the Mediterranean, and the southern parts of the United States (Leung & Cohen, 2011). According to Cohen and Nisbett (1994) honor cultures historically developed in areas with scarce resources and a weak state. In the absence of effective law-enforcement, people living in these areas were at high risk of being robbed from their livelihood and had to rely on self-protection to deter rivals. As such, it became very important to develop a reputation of being someone who is not to be taken advantage of, but also as someone who is not about to take advantage of others. As Schneider describes in his work on honor in Sicily, it was very important for an honor culture member to "(…)

[13] Recently, Leung & Cohen (2011) further developed a framework around honor and two other cultural ideals, those of *dignity* and *face*. Dignity is defined as the value of an individual, irrespective of the opinion of others. In dignity cultures, the value of a person is inherent at birth and at least equal to that of every other person. Face also concerns the value of a person in the eyes of society, but depends more on a person's position within the greater social hierarchy. Face is also not something that is contested; people have face until they lose it, but they cannot lose it at the expense of someone else's face (for a full discussion of these two ideals see Leung & Cohen, 2011).

demonstrate to others that (1) he is worthy of their trust and loyalty, and (2) that he is not a fesso, not to be taken lightly, not to be taken advantage of " (Schneider, 1969, p. 147).

Personal integrity and assertiveness — especially for males — are hence two important domains of honor. Another domain which is considered vital in such cultures is family honor (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2012; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a). Family honor pertains to the good name and reputation of one's family and reciprocally influences the way people are perceived and valued in honor cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2000). Upholding one's family honor is essential for honor culture members, particularly in the Middle-East and the Mediterranean, and these family honor concerns have been shown to cause antagonistic responses to honor threats in these cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b; Van Osch, et al., 2013).

The relationship between honor, insults, and aggression has been the focal point of most honor research. For example, on 18 November 2013, the key words "culture of honor" return 41 hits in Web of Science of articles related to honor of which 34 (85%) carry a title or abstract that includes violence, revenge, or some reference to aggression. A number of these studies examine insults as instigators of threat to one's honor and the interpersonal ramifications of being offended. Early work by Cohen and colleagues for example (Cohen, et al., 1996) showed that after being insulted, participants from an honor culture showed more non-verbal and physiological signs of stress and aggression, compared to non-honor culture members. More specifically, the tendency to respond more vigorously to insults has been linked to the protection of family honor and the need to protect one's social image in subsequent research (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Van Osch, et al., 2013). Additionally, prior research shows that honor-endorsement not only explains intercultural differences but also intracultural differences in responding aggressively to insults. Even in non-honor cultures, people with high honor values also perceive

more threat after an insult and respond more vigorously to it (Beersma, et al., 2003; IJzerman, et al., 2007).

In conclusion, previous research has made clear a) that honor is for an important part based on social worth, b) that the maintenance and protection of positive social evaluations are considered essential in honor cultures, c) that insults threaten this sense of social worth and d) insults are met with aggression in order to prevent or eliminate their potentially honor-threatening impact.

At the same time, less attention is usually paid to a recurring finding that in the absence of insults or in response to a good deed, people from an honor culture are in fact more friendly, forthcoming, and cooperative than non-honor culture members (Cohen & Vandello, 2004; Harinck, et al., 2013; Leung & Cohen, 2011). In fact, recent research has shown that both obliging responses before and aggressive responses after an insult result from the same underlying motivational inclination — the need to prevent loss of honor (Shafa, et al., *under review*). This means that honor-related aggression is not insurmountable and that there are conditions in which people who attach high value to honor try to avoid conflict escalation. The question what motivates this behavior has not been answered by research thus far. Additionally, research has not provided concrete strategies that might be effective in reducing honor culture members' need to become aggressive in response to an insult. In the current paper, we develop such a strategy and assess its effect in an immersive experimental paradigm.

Explaining insult-elicited aggression

Of particular interest to our studies is the notion that social worth plays an important part in defining one's honor and that insults instigate a threat to this social worth. As social worth relies on positive external evaluations, it is a commodity that is hard to gain but easy to lose (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As such, social worth is transient and vulnerable. Empirical findings support this notion, since social disapproval has a more severe impact on people who rely on external cues for self-validation than on those who rely on internal cues for self-

validation (Barnes, et al., 1988; Williams, Schimel, Hayes, & Martens, 2010). Internal or personal worth on the other hand is believed to be more stable and less vulnerable to external judgments (Leung & Cohen, 2011).

The distinction between personal worth and social worth has not been addressed empirically in previous research examining the impact of insults on aggression. In the current paper we connect source of self-worth to affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to insults. We argue that when self-worth depends on social approval, as it does when people have high concerns for honor, people will be more sensitive to social evaluative cues, making them more susceptible to negative consequences of insults. This sensitivity should result in more negative affect, more cognitive self-devaluation, and a stronger need to respond in a confrontational manner than when self-worth depends on internal approval.

Preventing insult-elicited aggression

Research has shown that one possible way to relieve the impact of a self-threat such as an insult is by self-affirmation (Critcher, Dunning, & Armor, 2010; Henry, 2009). Self-affirmations consist of an array of self-defensive strategies for the psyche to maintain its integrity in response to the numerous potentially threatening situations that people face (Sherman & Cohen, 2002; Steele, 1988). This strategy is also often used by psychologists in experimental procedures to decrease the implications of a threatening event for self-integrity (for a review, see Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Prior research thus suggests that self-affirmation offers a fruitful approach to diminish insult-elicited aggression. However, its effect has not been empirically tested in an honor-culture context, where self-integrity more strongly relies on external evaluations. We argue that a strategy that affirms the social self, rather than the personal self might be more effective in honor cultures (see also Hoshino-Browne, et al., 2005). This should be the case because vigilance towards insults among honor culture members is the result of the vulnerable nature of the self-worth, which for an important part relies on social worth. Our approach is novel because this is a first attempt to

distinguish different forms of affirmation that should cater for internally and socially conferred self-worth.

Role of self-esteem

In our studies, we also take into account the level of self-esteem of our participants and assess its interplay with source of self-worth. Heretofore, research assessing the connection between self-esteem and aggression has revealed mixed results (for a review, see Ostrowsky, 2010). On the one hand, some studies have shown that low self-esteem rather than high self-esteem is associated with aggression (Walker & Bright, 2009; Webster, 2006). Recently however, there is more evidence suggesting that high (or inflated) self-esteem rather than low elf-esteem is associated with aggressive responses to ego-threats (Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). It might be that the relation between high self-esteem and aggression hinges on the extent to which self-esteem is stable or vulnerable. For people with high self-esteem have more to lose from an ego-threat than people with low self-esteem, particularly if self-esteem is vulnerable. As discussed before, self-worth that is based on social evaluations, as in honor cultures, is more vulnerable than internally defined worth. Therefore, we argue that particularly high levels of self-esteem might fuel the relationship between reliance on social approval, such as honor, and aggressive responses to ego-threats or insults.

Current studies

In the current paper, we first examined the overall relations between source of self-worth, self-esteem, and insult-elicited aggression. In a correlational study, we first measured self-esteem and source of self-worth. Next, we assessed participants' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to different insult scenarios. We hypothesized that, in general, those who highly depend on social worth would be negatively affected by the insults, but mainly those who depend on social worth and have high self-esteem would respond in a confrontational manner. To examine whether source of self-worth and

sensitivity to insults covary — irrespective of cultural background — we first assessed this relation independent from honor values, that is, within a non-honor-culture context.

In a second study, we extended these findings to an honor-culture context by focusing on honor-culture participants. We assessed the efficacy of a self-affirmation and a social affirmation in reducing insult-elicited aggression among honor culture members. If socially conferred worth is indeed what makes honor-culture members more aggressive after an insult, a social affirmation should be effective in reducing insult-elicited aggression while a traditional self-affirmation should not. To test this hypothesis, we used an immersive experimental paradigm in which participants were actually insulted and behavioral indicators of aggression were measured.

Study 5.1

Participants and design

Participants were recruited at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences of Leiden University. In total, 135 students participated. Because the aim of this study was to examine the hypothesized relation between self-esteem, source of self-worth, and aggressive responses to an insult in a homogeneous cultural sample, 22 participants with a cultural background other than Dutch were excluded from analysis. The final dataset consisted of 113 participants (84 female, 74.3%; age M = 20.93, SD = 3.47). The study had a within-subject (3 scenarios) design, with source of self-worth and self-esteem as continuous independent variables.

Instruments and procedure

Participants were recruited with the cover story that this study was about the impact of negative affect on consumer behavior. After entering the lab and signing the informed consent, participants were placed in individual cubicles in front of a desktop computer. A questionnaire was administered using Qualtrics software.

After the general instructions, we first measured self-esteem and source of self-worth, followed by demographics and some filler questions pertaining to consumer behavior. We then presented participants with three different scenarios describing an insult. The vignettes were based on freely generated insult scenarios as described by Uskul and colleagues (Uskul, et al., 2012) and adapted to a setting that would resonate with a student population. In the first scenario, a person's *morality* was called into question when he/she was falsely accused by his/her manager of stealing money from the safe and called *a thief*. In the second scenario, after not being assertive enough, a person's *sociability* was impugned by a roommate by being called *socially inadequate*. In the third scenario, a person was made to look *incompetent* in the presence of his/her partner and called *retarded* by a bank employee. We used three different scenarios to make sure that our findings were not restricted to one particular setting or type of insult. The order in which each insult was presented was randomized. Each scenario was followed by the same set of questions assessing the offensiveness of the insult and the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of the participants. Afterwards, participants were informed about the true nature of the study, thanked and rewarded with either € 3,- or 1 course credit for their participation.

Measures

All items were measured using seven-point scales, unless stated otherwise.

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979). This scale measures trait self-esteem using ten positively worded and negatively worded items (e.g., *On the whole, I am satisfied with myself* and *I feel I do not have much to be proud of*' (r); $\alpha = .88$). Items were recoded such that higher scores indicated higher self-esteem.

Source of worth. We used the Approval of Others scale of the Contingencies of Self-worth questionnaire (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003) to assess the extent to which participants relied on internal vs.

social evaluations as a source of personal worth. This scale originally consisted of three items indicating an internal source of worth (e.g., *What others think of me has no effect on what I think about myself*) and two items indicating an external source of self-worth (e.g., *I can't respect myself if others don't respect me*). For the purpose of this study, we added a sixth item closely related to concerns for honor and assessing participants' reputational concerns (*It is important for me to have a good reputation*). Reliability analyses showed that this item fit well with the original scale (α = .71, α if item deleted = .68). Items were recoded such that higher scores indicated a more socially-based sense of worth.

The following measures reappeared after each of the three insult vignettes.

Offensiveness. Participants indicated on three items to what extent they considered the scenario to be offensive (*I would feel a)offended, b)hurt, c)insulted if this would happen to me*; α = .44). Higher score in this scale indicate more offensiveness.

Cognitive devaluation. Cognitive devaluation of the self following the insult was measured with four items (*If this situation would happen to me, I would a)evaluate myself in a more negative way, b)feel rejected, c)feel inferior, d)feel insecure about myself*; α = .69). Higher scores indicate more devaluation of the self.

Negative affect. The affective response to the insult was measured with four items (*If I would be in this situation, I would be a) upset, b) frustrated, c) angry, d) irritated*; α = .60). Higher scores indicate more negative affect.

Behavioral inclinations. Eight items assessed participants' behavioral inclinations in the given scenario. Four items assessed the inclination to confront the transgressor (*I would a) assert myself, b) confront the wrongdoer, c) raise my voice, d) verbally disapprove of the wrongdoer if this would happen to me*, α = .49). Four items assessed the inclination to behave in an avoidant manner (*I would a) withdraw from the scene, b) avoid confrontation, c) ignore*

the wrongdoer, d) avoid a conflict if this would happen to me; α = .69) in response to the insult. Confrontation and withdrawal were correlated negatively in all three scenarios (r = -.38, r = -.51, and r = -.74 respectively, all ps < .001). Therefore we recoded the withdrawal items and combined them into one scale in such a way that high scores indicated more confrontation and low scores indicated more withdrawal (α = .74). We ran analyses on the separate and combined scales. Results were highly similar for both types of analyses. To be concise, we will only report the results pertaining to the combined scale.

Results

Table 5.1

Descriptive statistics per scenario

		Morality	Sociability	Competence
Offensiveness	**M**	6.24[a]	4.65[b]	6.07[a]
	SD	.92	1.57	1.11
Cognitive devaluations	**M**	3.11[a]	3.40[b]	3.71[c]
	SD	1.34	1.45	1.43
Negative Affect	**M**	5.85[a]	4.63[b]	5.01[c]
	SD	.98	1.34	1.17
Behavior	**M**	5.38[a]	4.91[b]	5.01[b]
	SD	.91	1.11	1.34

Note. Means in rows with different signs differ significantly

Descriptive statistics for each scenario and within-subject effects are presented in Table 5.1. In general, participants considered the morality insult to be most offensive, followed by the competence insult, and the sociability insult. Also, the morality insult caused more negative affect and the inclination to confront the transgressor more than the other two insults. The self-devaluation however, was lowest in this scenario, indicating that participants generally rejected this insult the most. Initial inspections revealed that analyzing the scenarios separately resulted in the same pattern of outcomes as analyzing the

collapsed data, but the latter yielded more robust effects. Therefore, we will only discuss the findings pertaining to the collapsed data.

For the purpose of the following analyses, we first centered source of self-worth and self-esteem around their mean and also calculated their centered interaction term. Then we regressed our dependent measures on both main effects, after which we included the interaction term in the second step. Correlations between measures are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Correlations between source of self-worth, self-esteem and dependent measures collapsed over scenarios

	Self-Worth	**Self-esteem**	**Offensive-ness**	**Cognitive devaluation**	**Negative affect**
Self-esteem	-.304**				
Offensiveness	.408**	-.045			
Cognitive deval.	.517**.	-.459**	.426**		
Negative affect	329**	-.185*	.708**	.435**	
Behavior	-.117	.215*	.095	-.315**	.176^{+}

Note. n = 113, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$., $^{+}$ $p < .1$ (two sided)

Offensiveness. For offensiveness, we only found a significant main effect for source of self-worth, β = .435, $t(112) = 4.76$, $p < .001$, 95% *CI* = .244 - .533. The stronger their reliance on external approval, the more offense participants' took at the insults. The main effect of self-esteem and the interaction effect of source of self-worth and self-esteem were not significant (ts < 1).

Cognitive devaluation. We found significant but opposing main effects for source of self-worth and self-esteem on cognitive devaluation. The higher their reliance on external approvals, the more participants tended to devalue themselves in response to the insults, β = .416, $t(112) = 5.20$, $p < .001$, 95% *CI*

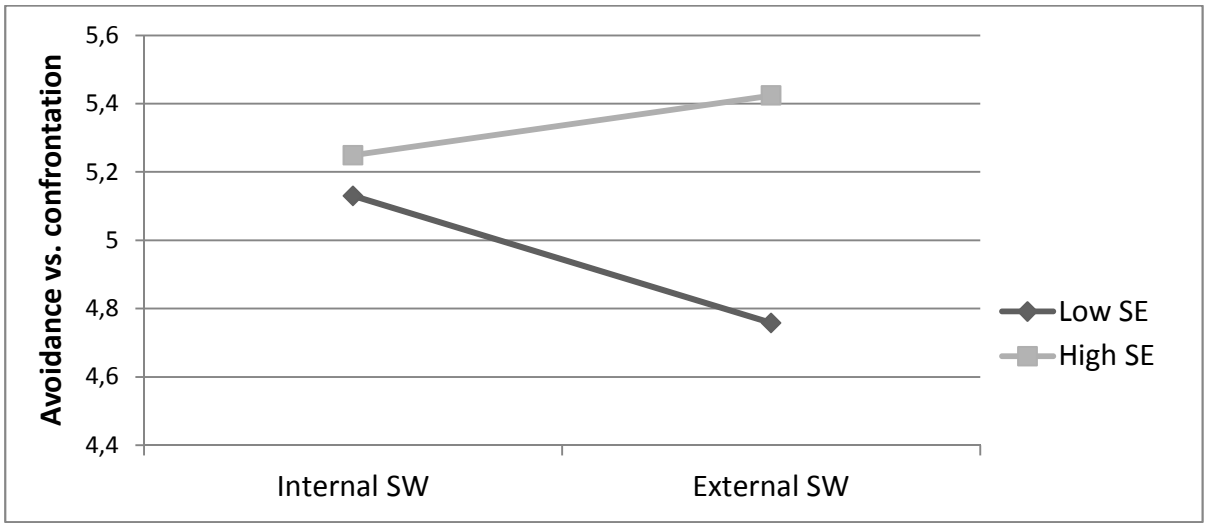
= .324 - .721. On the other hand, higher self-esteem led participants to devalue themselves to a lesser extent. The interaction effect of source of self-worth and self-esteem was not significant ($t < 1$).

Negative affect. There was only a significant main effect of source of self-worth on negative affect following insults. The higher their reliance on external approval as a source of self-worth, the more negative affect participants reported after being insulted $\beta = .300$, $t(112) = 3.19$, $p = .002$, 95% *CI* = .113 - .484. The regression analysis did not yield a significant main effect of self-esteem nor an interaction between source of self-worth and self-esteem on negative affect (*t*s < 1.13, *ns*).

Behavioral inclinations. We found a significant main effect of self-esteem on behavioral inclinations in response to the insults, indicating that the higher their self-esteem, the more inclined participants were to confront the transgressor $\beta = .233$, $t(112) = 2.39$, $p = .019$, 95% *CI* = .04 - .37. Interestingly, we also found a significant interaction of source of self-worth and self-esteem on behavior, $\beta = .194$, $t(112) = 2.08$, $p = .04$, 95% *CI* = .01 - .32; see Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1.

Source of self-worth by self-esteem interaction effect on behavioral inclinations in response to insults.



Analyses indicated that participants with a more internal source of self-worth — low on external self-worth — responded equally confrontational to the insults, irrespective of their level of self-esteem. However, among participants who relied strongly on an external source of self-worth, those with high self-esteem were more inclined to confront the transgressor while those low in self-esteem were less inclined to confront and more inclined to avoid the transgressor. Additionally, the main effect of source of self-worth was not significant.

Discussion

In this study, we examined which self-related concerns associated with honor — source of self-worth and self-esteem — influence participants' affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to insults. The findings corroborate our predictions that, independent of cultural background, people who strongly rely on social approval as a source of self-worth are more vulnerable to the negative affective and cognitive consequences of interpersonal insults. Interestingly, we also found that among those with an internal source of self-worth, high self-esteem might inhibit the need to respond vigorously to insults. However, when self-worth relies on external evaluations, high self-esteem fuels the need to respond more forcefully to insults.

Study 5.2

The results of the previous study are conceptually interesting, because they are among the first to empirically connect source of self-worth to insult-elicited cognition, affect, and behavior. However, the study had a correlational design and was conducted among a group of participants who have generally low endorsement of honor values. Therefore, in a second study, we aimed to assess the causal relation between social worth and insult-elicited aggression by introducing an experimental manipulation that affects this specific self-related concern, i.e., a social affirmation. We assessed to what extent this manipulation would be able to prevent insult elicited-aggression in a sample of honor-culture participants. We compared its effect to a control condition without any

affirmation and to a comparable manipulation that has been forwarded in previous literature — a self-affirmation, (Henry, 2009) — but is expected to be less effective in reducing insult-elicited aggression if our predictions are valid.

We hypothesized that a traditional self-affirmation, that instructs people to think of characteristics or values that are important to them personally, might be less effective in reducing aggression among people who define their worth on the basis of external evaluations, as is the case in honor cultures. In such contexts it might be more effective to remind people of characteristics that are especially praised by important others, i.e. using a social affirmation (see also Hoshino-Browne, et al., 2005). As such we expect that the efficacy of a social affirmation is related to the extent to which people rely on social evaluations as a source of self-worth. Additionally, as self-worth may be more vulnerable when it is based on external evaluations, like in honor cultures, a traditional self-affirmation might backfire among those with high self-esteem, because it inflates the self-esteem, making it more sensitive to ego-threats (Ostrowsky, 2010). We compared the effect of both types of affirmations to a control condition with no affirmation at all.

Method

Participants and design

Participants were recruited at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences of Leiden University. In total, 80 participants with an honor-culture background participated. We classified participants who were born in an honor culture, and/or whose both parents were born in an honor-culture as honor culture participants (Harinck, et al., 2013; Shafa, et al., 2014). All recruited participants fit this qualification. Seven participants were excluded from analysis because they communicated to us that they did not believe they were actually paired with another participant during the study. Two additional participants were excluded from the analyses because they did not comply with the intervention instructions. The final dataset consisted of 71 honor-culture participants with age (M = 22.63, SD = 4.10) and gender (55 female, 77.5%)

equally distributed among conditions. The study had a single factorial between-participants design with three conditions (Affirmation: social affirmation vs. self-affirmation vs. control).

Instruments and procedure

When participants entered the lab, they were informed that they were about to participate in a study investigating the characteristics of digital cooperation, such as via mail or online chat. They were told that they would be randomly paired with another participant in the lab, whom they did not know or meet, and would perform two tasks together. Additionally, they would answer questions related to their performance and experience. After consenting, participants were placed in individual cubicles in front of a PC and randomly assigned to one of the three conditions. All test materials were administered via a desktop computer equipped with Authorware 7 and a standard issue headphone.

First, participants answered a number of questions assessing mood, self-esteem, and source of self-worth. These questions were followed by the affirmation manipulation. In the affirmation conditions, participants were instructed to think of a situation in which they felt good about themselves because of an exceptional achievement or characteristic. In the social affirmation condition, participants were instructed to think about when they were praised by close others, while in the self-affirmation condition, they were instructed to think about a time when they praised themselves (see Appendix 5.1). They were encouraged to describe that situation in detail and report what it was that made them feel good about themselves. In the control condition, participants were asked to report which was their favorite movie and why.

Next, each participant was ostensibly linked to another participant via a network connection and performed the two cooperation tasks. These were the exact same two tasks as described in Study 3 and 4.3, in which participants solve 30 word puzzles on the first task and then engage in a reaction time game in the second task (Competitive Reaction Time task, Taylor, 1967). In this study

however, all participants received insulting feedback. The second task again gauged the level of aggression they tended to express towards that same collaborator.

After these two tasks, the supposed connection between participants was terminated, and participants continued by filling out a remaining questionnaire. This questionnaire contained an honor concerns measure, a post-measure of mood, some questions about their experience of the cooperation, and demographics. Afterwards, participants were debriefed about the true nature of the study, thanked, and rewarded with either € 3,- or 1 course credit for their participation. All measures were assessed using seven-point scales unless stated otherwise.

Measures

Mood. We used the Dutch version of the Positive and Negative Affect scale (F. P. M. L. Peeters, Ponds, & Vermeeren, 1996; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) to measure mood at the beginning and at the end of the experiment. This measure consists of 20 items assessing both positive (e.g., *excited* and *determined*) and negative mood states (e.g., *irritated* and *afraid*). Exploratory factor analyses indicated that a solution consisting of three factors fit our data best in both pre- and the post-measures. Thus we constructed three mood scales per measure indicating positive mood (10 items; pre-measure ; α = .91.; post-measure ; α = .94), dejection/fear (6 items; pre-measure ; α = .77; post-measure ; α = .84) and annoyance (4 items; pre-measure ; α = .60; post-measure ; α = .70).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was measured with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979) as in Study 1 (α = .85).

Source of worth. Besides the Approval of Others scale we used in Study 1 (α = .86 in this sample), we used three additional scales of the Contingencies of Self-worth Questionnaire that were most relevant to the current study and cultural sample to measure source of worth. These scales were Family support (e.g., *It is important to my self-respect that I have a family that cares about me*;

α = .71), Virtue (e.g., *My self-esteem depends on whether or not I follow my moral/ethical principles*; α = .76), and Competition (e.g., *Doing better than others gives me a sense of self-respect*; α = .93). Each scale consisted of five items. We included the additional scales to rule out alternative sources of self-worth as alternative predictors of our hypothesized outcome.

Aggression. The level of noise bursts administered throughout the Competitive Reaction Time task (Taylor, 1967) was used as an indication of participants' aggression towards their supposed opponent. This measure varied between 60 dB and 105 dB. In line with previous research, we analyzed the noise level in the first trial separately from the remaining 24 trials (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Meier, et al., 2006). The first noise burst most accurately reflects the response to the previous insulting interaction, while the advanced noise bursts are highly influenced by the preceding noise levels set by the other. The levels of noise participants received was set to steadily incline, mimicking conflict escalation (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998).

Honor concerns. To measure honor concerns, we used the Family Honor Scale of the Honor Concerns questionnaire (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). This scale consisted of five items and assessed to what extent certain honor-threatening scenarios would harm a person's self-worth (e.g., *To what extent would it harm your self-worth if you were known as someone who is not able to protect your family's reputation*; α = .66). We focused on this domain because previous research has shown that concerns in this domain are the most central part of honor in our sample and the reason why they respond aggressively to insults (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2012; Van Osch, et al., 2013). Because the Family Honor Scale measures stable individual differences, we decided to include this scale at the end of the experiment to avoid suspicion about the specific focus of the study and to avoid priming the participants with honor.

Checks. Seven questions assessed how participants had experienced the cooperation. Three questions concerned the valence of the cooperation (*The cooperation with the other participants was pleasant* (r)*, amusing* (r), and *tense*;

α = .74) and three questions assessed the extent to which participants were offended by the feedback they received (*I was offend by/angry with the other participant* and *I wanted to punish the other participant*; α = .72). Finally, participants were encouraged to evaluate the cooperation in an open-ended question. The response to this question was screened to assess whether participants were suspicious of the cover story or the absence of an actual collaborator.

Results

Checks. ANOVAs revealed no significant differences between conditions on both control measures indicating that participants in all conditions experienced the supposed cooperation as equally negative and insulting (*F*s < 1.21).

Honor concerns. An ANOVA examining self-reported honor concerns revealed that these did not differ between experimental condition ($F < 1$). As intended, all participants in this study scored well above the scale midpoint ($M = 5.39$, $SD = .85$; $t(70) = 13.75$, $p < .001$, 95% $CI = 1.19 - 1.59$), indicating that family honor was a major concern in this context.

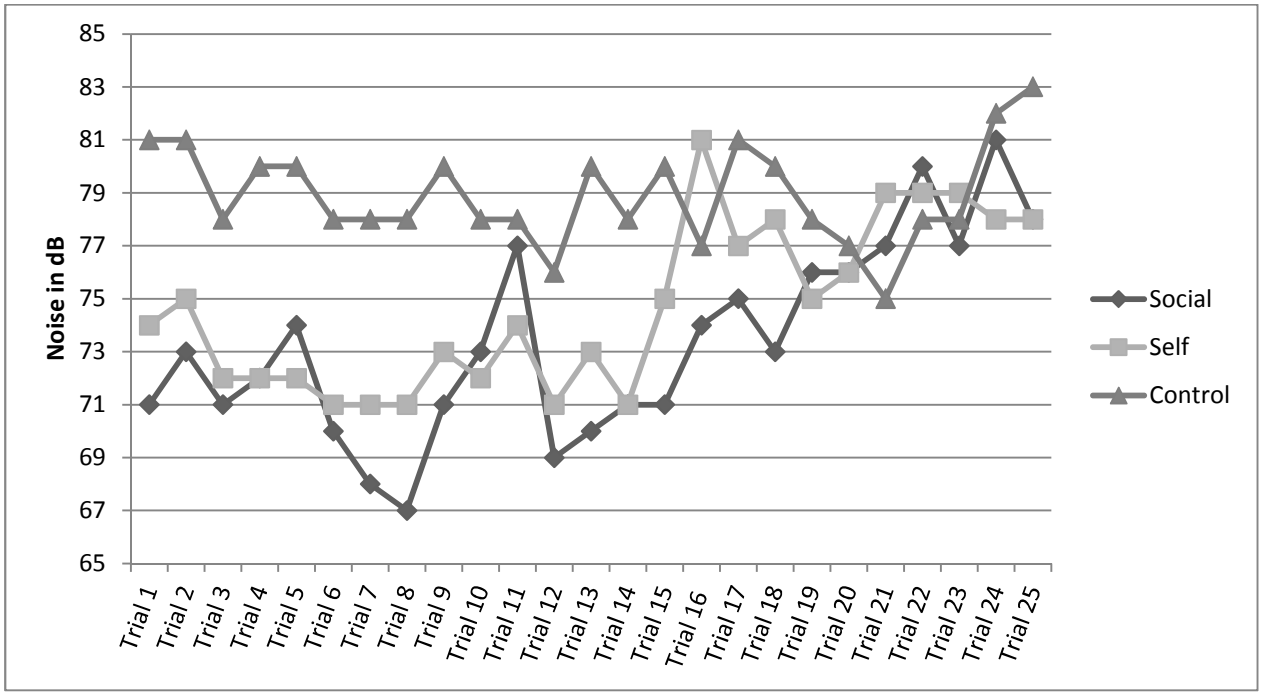
Mood. We used three Repeated Measures ANOVAs with condition as between-subject factor and pre- and post-measure as within-subject factor to analyze differences in the three mood scales separately. We found significant within-subject effects for positive mood ($F(1, 68) = 11.29$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$) and annoyance ($F(1, 68) = 17.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$). In general, participants experienced less positive mood (pre-measure: $M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.95$; post-measure: $M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.16$) and more annoyance (pre-measure: $M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.74$; post-measure: $M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.14$) after having been insulted. Participants did not experience more dejection or fear-related emotions and there were no interactions between the within- and between-subject factors (all *F*s < 1). These results indicate that being insulted indeed caused distress in all participants and to an equal extent in all conditions.

Self-esteem and source of worth. We analyzed the self-esteem and source of worth scales using separate ANOVAs with condition as between-subject factor. Neither of these scale scores depended significantly on experimental condition (all *F*s < 1). This confirms there were no pre-existing differences between conditions on the two measures relating to self-worth.

Aggression. The noise levels set in each condition during the course of the CRT are depicted in Figure 5.2. To assess the effect of condition on aggression, while taking into account individual differences in source of self-worth and level of self-esteem, we first centered source of self-worth and level of self-esteem around their mean. We also calculated their interaction term. We then regressed level of white noise on the main effects of condition, self-worth, and self-esteem in the first step and then added the interaction term of self-worth and self-esteem in the second step. We performed two separate regression analyses, one for the noise level set on the first trial and one for the averaged noise levels set on the remaining trials (2-25).

Figure 5.2

Levels of white noise set on each trial per condition



First trial. We first examined the noise levels set on the first trial (see Table 5.3), as this is most indicative of participant's response to the insulting feedback previously received. The regression analysis yielded a significant main effect of source of self-worth, $\beta = -.244$, $t(70) = -2.07$, $p = .042$, 95% *CI* = -5.23 - -.095, indicating that overall in this sample of participants from an honor culture, those whose sense of worth was more socially-defined tended to respond less aggressively after being insulted. More importantly, we observed a significant main effect of condition $\beta = .277$, $t(70) = 2.42$, $p = .018$, 95% *CI* = .86 - 8.98. To investigate this effect further, we performed ANOVA on the first noise level with condition as between-subject factor, and conducted LSD post hoc tests to examine specific contrasts. This revealed that the noise levels in the social affirmation condition ($M = 71.74$, $SD = 12.12$) were significantly lower compared to the control condition ($M = 81.30$, $SD = 14.94$; $p = .024$), as predicted. The self-affirmation condition ($M = 74.60$, $SD = 14.86$) did not differ from the other two conditions. As a result, the overall effect of condition was only marginally significant in the ANOVA, $F(2, 68) = 2.81$, $p = .067$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$).

These results indicate that the social affirmation condition was indeed effective in lowering the initial need to become aggressive in response to insulting feedback, while the self-affirmation condition did not significantly diminish the amount of aggression participants displayed compared to the control condition. The main effect of self-esteem was not significant, nor was the interaction effect of source of self-worth and level of self-esteem. To further examine how socially-defined self-worth affects noise levels under different circumstances, we examined correlations between the noise level on the first trial, source of self-worth, and self-esteem in each experimental condition.

In the social affirmation condition, initial noise levels were only significantly correlated to the source of self-worth scale, $r = -.489$, $p = .018$, indicating that in this condition, noise levels were set lower by those who defined their worth socially.

Table 5.3

Regression analysis of condition, and source of self-worth (SSW), and self-esteem (SE) on noise level in first trial

		B	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*F* change
Step 1	**Constant**	66.00	4.38	15.08	<.001	.016
	Condition	4.92	2.03	2.42	.018	
	SSW	-2.66	1.29	-2.07	.042	
	SE	.86	1.87	.46	.65	
Step 2						
	Constant	66.32	4.42	14.99	<.001	.516
	Condition	4.88	2.04	2.39	.020	
	SSW	-2.58	1.29	-1.99	.051	
	SE	1.0	1.88	.53	.59	
	SSW*SE	.778	1.19	.65	.52	

Note. Condition 1 = social affirmation, 2 = self-affirmation, 3 = control ; $n = 113$

Interestingly, in the self-affirmation condition, noise levels on the first trial were only significantly correlated with level of self-esteem, $r = .50$, $p = .011$, indicating that in this condition, higher levels of noise were set by those high in self-esteem. There were no significant correlations between noise levels and self-esteem, or self-worth in the control condition.

Trials 2-25. The noise levels set during the remainder of the CRT were combined to indicate aggression in response to further escalation of the situation, in which the other person administers increasing levels of noise to the participant. Regression analysis on the average noise levels set in the remaining 24 trials of the CRT (see Table 5.4) revealed a significant interaction of source of self-worth by self-esteem, $\beta = .277$, $t(70) = 2.42$, $p = .018$, 95% *CI* = .86 - 8.98.

Table 5.4

Regression analysis of condition, and source of self-worth (SSW), and self-esteem (SE) on average noise levels in trials 2-25

		B	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*F* change
Step 1	**Constant**	70.42	4.17	16.87	<.001	.504
	Condition	2.85	1.93	1.47	.14	
	SSW	-.56	1.23	-.45	.65	
	SE	.04	1.78	.021	.98	
Step 2						
	Constant	71.41	4.07	17.52	<.001	.028
	Condition	2.74	1.88	1.46	.15	
	SSW	-.29	1.20	-.24	.81	
	SE	.49	1.74	.28	.78	
	SSW*SE	2.47	1.09	2.52	.028	

Note. Condition 1 = social affirmation, 2 = self-affirmation, 3 = control ; n = 113

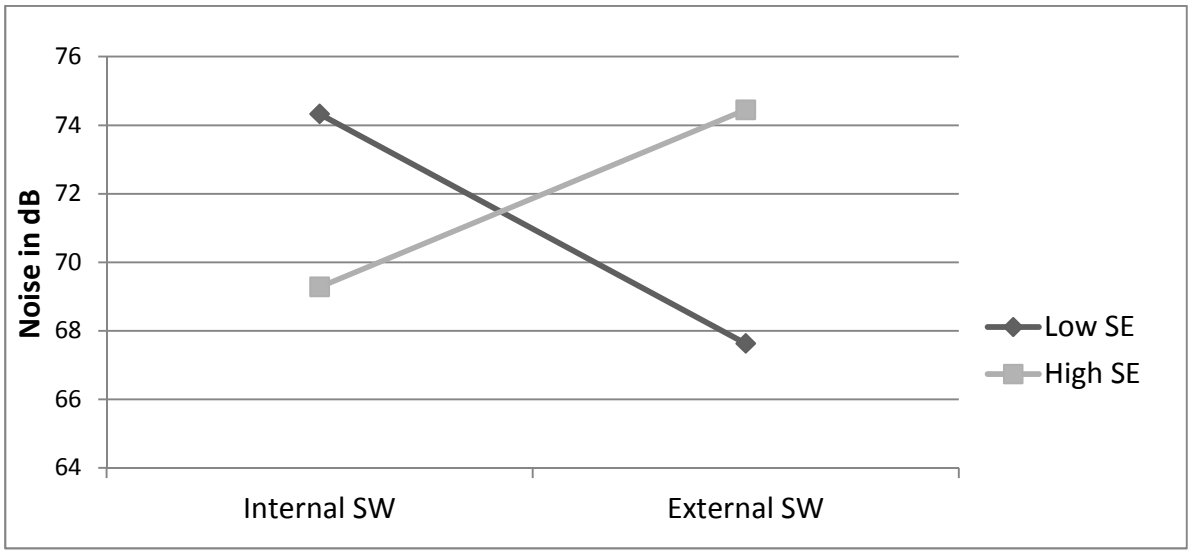
We have plotted this interaction in Figure 5.3. Results show that when self-worth is defined internally high self-esteem buffers against the need to respond more aggressively to insults. However, when self-worth is strongly based on social approval, high self-esteem actually fuels the need to react more aggressively to insults, which resonates with our observation in Study 5.1.

Discussion

The current study extends the findings of Study 5.1 to participants from an honor culture, and examines a possible way to prevent aggressive responses. In a more immersive situation in which honor-culture participants were actually insulted and exchanged white noise with their supposed insulter (indicating escalating aggression), we demonstrated that a social affirmation is effective in diminishing the initial need to respond more vigorously to insults compared to a control situation where no affirmation was made. A traditional self-affirmation, however, did not have this effect.

Figure 5.3

Source of self-worth by self-esteem interaction effect on mean white noise.



Additionally, taking into account interpersonal variations in source of self-worth and self-esteem, we found that a social affirmation reduced initial displays of aggression more when participants relied more strongly on socially conferred worth, as predicted. Notably, self-affirmation did not significantly reduce levels of aggression compared to the control condition and even increased aggression to the extent that participants had higher self-esteem.

Notably, displays of aggression during escalating noise levels set during the later trials replicated the results of Study 5.1 among an honor-culture sample. As the effect of the intervention faded during the CRT, a source of self-worth by self-esteem interaction effect on aggression emerged. This complements results of Study 5.1 which revealed that while self-esteem acts as a buffer among participants who define their self-worth internally, it fuels the need to become aggressive among those who define their worth socially.

Importantly, participants in all conditions reported to be equally affected by the insulting feedback, were equally concerned with their honor and experienced the interaction and their supposed collaborator to be equally

negative. These controls exclude a number of possible alternative explanations for the diminished levels of aggression in the social affirmation condition.

General discussion

Elaborating on previous research on honor, insults, and aggression, we hypothesized that insult-elicited aggression results from honor culture members' tendency to base their self-worth for an important part on social evaluations. Consequently, socially-conferred worth makes them more vulnerable to the negative consequence of negative social evaluations including insults. In a first correlational study, we connected socially-conferred worth to higher levels of cognitive self-devaluation and negative affect in different insulting scenarios. Additionally, we showed that socially-conferred worth interacted with level of self-esteem in predicting confrontational inclinations in these scenarios. While level of self-esteem did not affect confrontational inclinations in people who defined their worth internally, it did so among people who mainly defined their worth socially. Those high in self-esteem were more likely to confront the insulter while those low in self-esteem were more likely to withdraw.

In our second study, we extended these finding to a sample of honor-culture participants. In an immersive experiment, we compared the effectiveness of two different types of affirmations in preventing insult-elicited aggression. We discovered that a social affirmation reduced the tendency to administer white noise among honor culture members who had been insulted during a previous task relative to a control group with no affirmation, while a traditional self-affirmation did not have this effect. Moreover, results showed that this social affirmation was more effective when reliance on social approval was high, while the self-affirmation was less effective when self-esteem was high. Finally, during the course of the interaction, as the effect of the intervention started to fade, a similar interaction pattern between source of self-worth and level of self-esteem appeared, indicating that high self-esteem fuels aggression in response to insult, among those who define their worth based on social approval.

These results are both novel and fascinating. While most previous research has focused on establishing that honor culture members respond aggressively to insults, our findings are among the first to demonstrate a relationship between the social dimensions of honor and the heightened aggression following an insult — going beyond establishing covariation, to demonstrate a causal relation (see also Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). Such a response is a way of protecting and preventing further damage to one's social worth, an important dimension of honor. The results are also fascinating because they are the first to show that insult-elicited aggression among honor-culture members is not insurmountable. As our results revealed, affirming one's social worth is an effective way of preventing insult-elicited aggression among honor culture members. This finding complements the growing number of studies reporting honor-related antagonism, in which very few attempts have been made to examine measures that may help prevent these negative outcomes.

To our knowledge, one such attempt was made by Henry (2009) who argued that honor cultures develop among groups of people who are under the constant burden of a relatively low status. According to Henry, adherence to honor and aggressive protection of one's reputation is a form of vigilant low-status compensation, resulting from the need to protect one's stigmatized sense of social worth. Thus, a self-affirmation strategy would help compensate this low sense of worth and eliminate the need to respond aggressively to a threat to one's self-worth, such as after an insult. In an experiment, he showed that a self-affirmation diminished reported proneness to become aggressive after an insult among low-status participants (i.e. students with low parental income), compared to not-affirmed low-status participants. This difference was not found among affirmed and not-affirmed high-status participants. However, Henry did not make the important distinction between personal worth and social worth, as the self-affirmation in that study contained both aspects of worth. Additionally, this initial work examined imagined insults and self-reported indicators of aggression among high or low-status participants, instead of investigating honor

culture participants who actually suffer and respond to provocations — as was the case in our study. Therefore, our findings contribute to the prior literature on honor and insults by demonstrating the central importance of social worth as an important dimension of honor and its causal role in potentially escalatory responses to insults and offenses.

A strength of the current research is that we used different methods and measures to investigate the connection between source of worth and sensitivity to insults. Study 5.1 assessed self-reports in a correlational design to investigate the hypothesized association between source of worth and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to different insult descriptions. We included different types of insults to be able to relate our findings to different situations. In the second study, we demonstrated the causal relation between these focal variables, in an experimental design. In this study, honor culture participants were actually insulted and demonstrated genuine behavior indicative of aggression. This approach extends the external validity of our findings, and yields important information about possible interventions that may help prevent the emergence of aggression.

A possible limitation of this study is the fact that we cannot empirically ascertain the extent to which the social affirmation prevented aggression by buttressing participants' social worth. Including a measure that gauges this process might have clarified this issue. However, we did not include such a measure in the current study in order to avoid the risk of making participants aware of the purpose of the self-affirmation procedure. Drawing further conclusions from this research, it is important to note that we only established an effect of the social affirmation on initial displays of aggression (i.e., during the first trial of the white noise task). During the course of the task, participants were confronted with increasing levels of white noise administered by their interaction partner, which arguably overruled initial tendencies based on the affirmation manipulation. This explains why during the course of the task the behavior displayed by participants is guided more by the increasing noise levels

set by their interaction partner, as well as their individual dispositions — which in this case included source of worth and self-esteem. In fact, this also reflects results of prior research with this task, in which — for similar reasons — the main focus was on participants' behavior during the first trial (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Meier, et al., 2006). In line with these earlier studies, the effects of the affirmation manipulation are most clearly visible on participants' behavior on the first trial of this task.

We highlight two interesting directions for future research. First, it is important to investigate whether the effectiveness of a social affirmation in reducing aggression is something that is particular to honor, or that a social affirmation in general is just more powerful than a self-affirmation. Our results cannot answer this question. One way to do this is by repeating the same study, including participants from honor cultures as well as dignity cultures. Such a study would not only allow for a replication of the current findings, it would also allow for an assessment of the impact of different types of affirmations in each of the two groups. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of the ideal of dignity, one would expect that a self-affirmation would be more effective in a dignity group, because their worth is defined more internally.

Additionally, these results could be of particular interest to practitioners in the field of negotiation and conflict management. As mentioned before, little has been done to develop methods that might prevent negative outcomes associated with insults. Our study offers a first step in this direction, as it informs us on what interventions should consist of in order to be effective in reducing insult-elicited aggression. The next step is to develop practical interventions, based on this knowledge, which can be tested and further improved in the field of negotiation and conflict management. As intercultural communication is now commonplace in many societies, this line of research can contribute significantly to easing intercultural relations involving honor cultures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our results show that socially-defined worth plays an important part in explaining why people from an honor culture respond more aggressively to insults. By affirming their social worth, we were able to reduce their need to respond aggressively to insulting feedback in a sample of honor culture members while a traditional self-affirmation was not as effective. These findings have important theoretical and practical implications and inform us on why insults elicit more aggression when honor is at stake and how aggression can be prevented.

Appendix 5.1

Social affirmation

Describe a situation in which you were praised by your relatives, because of your exceptional characteristics or performance, which made you feel good about yourself. In your description, please mention what they said or did and why they made you feel good about yourself in detail.

Self-affirmation

Describe a situation in which you praised yourself because of your exceptional characteristics or performance, which made you feel good about yourself. In your description, please mention how this characteristic or performance was manifested and why it made you feel good about yourself in detail.

Chapter 6

General Discussion

"There is no dishonor in wisdom"

James Welch

Due to globalization, contact between people from different ethnic backgrounds has become commonplace in contemporary societies. In the Dutch society for example, 21% of the population is estimated to have a non-native ethnic background (CBS, November 2013). Ethnic diversity offers both advantages and challenges to daily life, because people from different ethnic backgrounds endorse different cultural norms, values, and convictions. Differences in core convictions may increase the risk of value conflicts (Kouzakova, et al., 2012) occurring in intercultural situations. This is especially likely when parties are unaware of each other's goals or do not recognize cues indicating increasing frustration about emerging differences. Therefore, understanding cultural differences and their impact on the way people manage conflicts is a topic of central importance in social psychological research.

In this dissertation however, I addressed differences in the way people weave together a set of shared values, norms, and beliefs into so-called cultural logics. These logics revolve around a central theme, each defined in terms of an ideal, which pertains to the way the worth of an individual is defined within that cultural context and how he/she should ideally behave (Leung & Cohen, 2011). The ideals of specific interest to this dissertation were *honor* and *dignity*. Honor reflects the value of an individual in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of others (Pitt-Rivers, 1965). Hence, honor can be lost due to negative social evaluations, such as offenses and confrontations. Dignity reflects the notion that each person possesses a value, intrinsic to him at birth, and at least equal to others (Ayers, 1984).

The cultural ideals of honor and dignity have received considerable attention in studies of conflict situations and conflict escalation, particularly with respect to antagonistic reactions after insults (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Cohen, et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b; Van Osch, et al., 2013). In general, it has been found that insults instigate more anger, higher levels of cortisol and testosterone, and more dominant and aggressive behavior in honor culture members compared to

dignity culture members. However, hardly any empirical research has addressed the question of *why* they respond in such a way (see also Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). As such, few researchers have investigated the implications of adherence to honor in relation to underlying psychological mechanisms such as judgment formation, threat management, or self-regulation and their impact on insult-elicited aggression. The studies in this dissertation contribute to existing knowledge by explicitly addressing these underlying psychological mechanisms, thus offering insight into what exactly leads to the destructive reactions of honor culture members to conflicts in general and insults in particular. Not only does this increase our understanding of the effects of honor values on conflict processes, it also enables us to discover ways in which the negative ramifications of insults can be prevented or diminished for those concerned with honor.

In this final chapter, I will discuss the findings of my own research in this area in this broader context. In a nutshell, the chapter covers honor-related differences in the perception and appraisal of insults, their impact on conflict management, as well as ways to diminish their negative impact. I will start by summarizing the most important findings of the empirical chapters of this dissertation before reflecting on overarching implications. I will also specify the limitations of this work and elaborate on recommendations that can be made on the basis of my findings.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, I examined how people perceive and evaluate insulting behavior, as this has been shown to be an important cause of conflict escalation when honor is at stake. Following previous conceptualizations of insults (Bond & Venus, 1991; Van Oudenhoven, et al., 2008) and research on interpersonal and group impression formation (De Bruin & Van Lange, 1999; Leach, et al., 2007; Wojciszke, 2005), I assessed to what extent insults damage people's sense of morality or competence and how this is influenced by honor.

Results of Study 2.1 revealed that individuals from an honor culture consider insulting behavior to be a stronger indication of immorality than incompetence of the transgressor compared to individuals from a dignity culture. In fact, both groups of participants were equally upset, but those high in honor reported to be more offended by the insulting behavior. Interestingly, the relationship between culture and the heightened moralization of the insulting behavior was mediated by the extent to which those high in honor were offended by the behavior. Apparently, insults are moralized more by those high in honor because they are considered more offensive. In Study 2.2, I took a different perspective, and asked participants to indicate how they would evaluate themselves after being insulted. Participants rated insults collected in Study 2.1 on the extent to which each insult would harm their own sense of morality or competence. Results of Study 2.1 were replicated, as participants who were more concerned with honor tended to moralize the insults to a larger extent. Again, the degree to which high-honor participants reported to be offended by the insults mediated this effect.

These findings are the first to connect honor to moral concerns. Morality is an important aspect of honor, as it is particularly important for honor culture members to be perceived as moral by others (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b; Uskul, et al., 2012). However, it has not specifically been considered in previous attempts to understand why people high in honor respond differently to insults. In fact, it has been implied that fierce responses to insults are primarily driven by concerns about one's perceived competence. Specifically, it has been argued that honor culture members respond more fiercely to insults because they do not want to appear weak or an easy prey (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). The current findings challenge this previous perspective on honor because they show that insults threaten honor culture member's perceived morality more than their perceived competence. These findings also demonstrate that insults affect people's moral identity because they are considered more offensive.

These findings elucidate why members from an honor culture respond more aggressively to insults; insults might require a direct reprimand for those high in honor because insults more strongly violate core moral norms. Aggression may be needed to rectify such violations and to maintain group integrity. This resonates with an explanation that Cohen and colleagues offered for their results. They stated that the more aggressive reaction to insults displayed by those from the Southern, rather than Northern States in the U.S.A. could perhaps be explained by the former being "… not accustomed to such rudeness" (Cohen, et al., 1996, p. 957). When collecting the data for this thesis, I have regularly experienced this myself when insulted honor culture participants stepped out of their cubicle during the course of the experiment to complain about their rude counterpart. Apparently, the generic moral imperative of being treated with respect by others is even more essential for those high in honor.

Chapter 3

Results of Chapter 2 demonstrated that those high in honor perceive insults differently. Insults are moralized more by those high in honor. In Chapter 3 of my dissertation, I investigated how this difference influences appraisals of insults in a competitive situation. I addressed this question by including physiological indicators that would allow me to examine responses that might not be revealed in traditional self-report measures. Specifically, I investigated how insults affect reactivity in measures of heart-rate, blood pressure, and vascular impedance. According to the Biopsychosocial model of arousal regulation (Blascovich, 2000; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996), reactivity in these cardiovascular indicators distinguishes between stress regulation associated with the psychological states of (negative) threat versus (positive) challenge. Using an experimental manipulation to activate honor or dignity concerns, I examined the general prediction that insults instigate threat when honor is made salient.

Results confirmed that when honor was activated, participants showed more cardiovascular reactivity associated with threat after receiving insulting feedback on their performance, while cardiovascular responses indicated challenge in response to neutral feedback. This response pattern characterized the activation of honor concerns, as it was reversed among participants whose dignity concerns had been experimentally activated. Behavioral displays of aggression (the extent to which participants administered white noise blasts to their supposed opponent) resonated with these physiological indicators. Interestingly, the results of this chapter also showed that – when honor concerns had been activated - participants who had been insulted (and who had exhibited the most aggression) reported being least angry by the end of the procedure. This suggests that the behavioral expression of resentment, through the administration of white noise to their opponent, helped participants to regulate their emotions after being insulted, as participants in this condition indicated being least angry after completion of the white noise task.

The notion that the behavioral expression of anger may facilitate the resolution of resentment has also been reported previously by Cohen and colleagues (Cohen, et al., 1999). In their study, honor culture participants who had acted out after being insulted were most likely to forgive their insulter compared to those who had not. The self-reported levels of anger we observed after the competitive task are in line with these earlier observations. More relevant to the central question in this thesis, Study 3 demonstrates that when the ideal of honor – rather than dignity - is made salient, insults are more likely to instigate a physiological state of threat as well as a forceful behavioral response.

Chapter 4

Results of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 demonstrated that insults are not only perceived as having more moral implications by those concerned with honor, they also instigate a sense of threat among them. The purpose of Chapter 4 was to investigate how these differences in insult perception and insult appraisal

affect the process of conflict development and conflict escalation when honor is at stake. More specifically, I set out to investigate why those concerned with honor are more obliging prior to an overt confrontation, but become more forceful once they have been offended, compared to those less concerned with honor (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996; Cohen, et al., 1999; Harinck, et al., 2013). I argued that when honor norms are activated, people will not only be concerned with managing an emerging conflict, they will also be concerned with preventing threats to their honor. To investigate this notion, I turned to Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997), that distinguishes between ideal goals and ought goals. When pursuing ideal goals, people employ a promotion focus, show eagerness, and are willing to take risks to achieve desired gains. When pursuing ought goals, people employ a prevention focus, are vigilant, and operate cautiously in order to avoid undesired losses. As the maintenance of one's reputation and the prevention of loss of honor is an important aspect of honor endorsement, I expected honor concerns to be associated with higher levels of prevention focus. In three studies, I investigated the link between honor and prevention focus as well as their impact on behavior during different stages of conflict.

Results of a first correlational Study (4.1) among a community sample showed that chronic prevention focus was higher among honor-culture members, compared to dignity-culture members, while promotion focus was equally high in both samples. These findings confirmed the notion that honor is associated with a pre-occupation with prevention goals rather than promotion goals.

In Study 4.2, I investigated how higher levels of prevention focus, associated with honor endorsement, affect behavior in a situation that has the potential to escalate but has not escalated yet. Results of this study revealed that the experimental activation of honor concerns resulted in more prevention strategies, more cooperative conflict intentions, and less dominant conflict intentions. Interestingly, the preference for more cooperative conflict intentions

in the high-honor group was mediated by the increased endorsement of prevention strategies. Additionally, participants indicated more agitation — an emotion that is seen as characterizing a prevention focus — when honor concerns had been activated, while no differences were found for discontent — a typical promotion focus emotion (Higgins, 1996).

In Study 4.3, I used the same experimental manipulation to assess the impact of honor activation on regulatory focus and aggression in an offensive setting, i.e. a setting in which a conflict had escalated. Results of this study supported the reasoning that insulting interactions are particularly likely to elicit more aggressive responses when honor concerns are involved. Importantly, when honor was deactivated, no reliable differences were found in aggression displays after being insulted compared to the situation where participants had received negative feedback. These findings demonstrate that derogatory or offensive feedback is particularly likely to instigate aggression among those high in honor, compared to an interaction where negative feedback is presented in an inoffensive way. Furthermore, parallel results were observed for measures of regulatory focus, indicating that aggression was associated with higher level of prevention focus when honor was activated.

Together, the results of these studies corroborate the notion that prevention concerns constitute a relevant factor in the psychology of honor. Activating honor concerns enhances the motivation to avoid undesired outcomes associated with conflict escalation. In a potentially conflictual interaction, individuals concerned with honor may not only jeopardize desired outcomes, but also run the risk of losing their honor. The increased vigilance results in a more deescalating approach at the initial stages of a possible confrontation. The purpose of this approach is to avoid that the conflict becomes overt. Importantly, however, these same concerns easily trigger aggressive responses once the interaction becomes offensive. As a pre-occupation with honor concerns implies that loss of honor is to be avoided at all cost, vigilance can quickly turn into tension and agitation when confronted with

an insulting comment, resulting in an outburst to reprimand the offender. The findings of these three studies are in line with the notion that honor is a scarce and costly commodity, which is hard to gain and easy to lose (Uskul, et al., 2012). In the face of a confrontation, people stand to lose their honor if insulted. The results also provide initial evidence for our reasoning regarding the link between honor, prevention focus, and conflict behavior. Patterns of early conflict avoidance and sudden conflict escalation are driven by the same underlying psychological mechanism, namely the prevention of loss of honor.

Chapter 5

The previous chapters of this dissertation focused on underlying psychological reasons why people concerned with honor respond more forcefully after being insulted. In Chapter 5, I addressed the question of how such responses can be diminished or prevented. Honor has been defined as the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of others (Leung & Cohen, 2011; Peristiany, 1965; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). However, the specific implications of defining one's worth based on other people's evaluations has rarely been considered in understanding or preventing insult-elicited aggression. I argued that reliance on socially-defined self-worth makes people more sensitive to the negative consequences of derogatory social evaluations, such as insults.

Results of the first correlational study (5.1) showed that the more people relied on social evaluations to define their self-worth, the more they tended to self-devaluate and experience negative affect when they were insulted. Additionally, participants with socially-defined self-worth and a high level of self-esteem preferred a more confrontational response type, while those with socially-defined worth and low self-esteem preferred a more avoidant response type.

In Study 5.2, I extended these findings to a more realistic setting by investigating how honor culture participants actually respond to offensive feedback on their performance. I assessed the role of social worth by

introducing an affirmation that buffers the social worth of individuals rather than their personal worth. Results of this study indeed showed that the social affirmation was effective in reducing initial levels of aggression honor culture participants displayed towards their supposed insulter compared to no affirmation at all. The level of aggression after the traditional self-affirmation did not differ from the control group. Interestingly, the social affirmation proved to be even more effective among those honor culture members who defined their self-worth more socially, which further corroborates the hypothesized link between socially-defined worth and insult-elicited aggression. Additional analyses once more showed that participants with more socially-defined self-worth aggressed more when they had high self-esteem than when they had low self-esteem. On the other hand, for participants with internally defined self-worth, high self-esteem evoked less aggression than low self-esteem.

In sum, these two studies together highlight an important reason why those high in honor respond more vigorously to insults. They do so because an essential part of their self-worth is based on the way they are valued by others. Socially-defined self-worth makes people more vulnerable to the negative cognitive and affective consequences of destructive social evaluations, such as insults. The results also show that insult-elicited aggression among those high in honor is not inevitable. It can be prevented by making a person less vulnerable to the negative impact of the insult to one's honor, for example by affirming one's social worth. This method of affirming one's social worth instead of affirming one's personal worth proved an effective way in postponing the moment at which honor culture members felt the need to respond aggressively after being insulted.

Furthermore, these studies identify level of self-esteem as an important predictor of more vigorous responses to insults. More specifically, results of the two studies combined suggest that self-esteem moderates the relation between source of self-worth and insult-elicited aggression. When self-worth is defined

internally, high self-esteem can help prevent aggression, possibly because it operates as a buffer against the negative consequences of insults. However, when self-worth is defined socially, high self-esteem might even fuel the need to respond more vigorously to insults**.**

Theoretical implications

The research and findings discussed in this dissertation contribute to theory in different ways, which I will discuss more elaborately below. In general, they extend the recently developed framework of cultural logics that bind norms, values, and customs around central themes such as honor and dignity (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Thereby, these findings contribute to existing knowledge about a class of cultures prevalent in the Middle-East and the Mediterranean, the culture of honor. These cultures are systematically overlooked in traditional cross-cultural research, which mainly focusses on prototypically individualistic or prototypically collectivistic cultures such as the USA and China respectively. To the extent that prior research has addressed honor concerns, this work has primarily revealed what people from honor cultures find insulting (Cross, et al., 2013; Uskul, et al., 2012) and how they respond to confrontational situations (Cohen, et al., 1996; Cohen, et al., 1999; Hayes & Lee, 2005; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2000). Only a very limited number of studies have addressed the psychological mechanisms that might explain *why* these patterns occur (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Van Osch, et al., 2013).

Psychological impact of insults

The current dissertation extends this knowledge by offering insights into the reasons why those concerned with honor respond differently to offenses. In general, findings indicate that offenses have a more severe psychological impact when honor is a major concern. Several findings confirm these notions. First, those concerned with honor judged other's insulting behavior to be more offensive and therefore moralized insults to a greater extent, compared to those low in honor. Additionally, insults instigated more threat on a physiological

level when honor concerns were activated, but not when dignity concerns were activated. Moreover, in the face of a —possibly— confrontational situation, activation of honor concerns was associated with prevention focus, indicating the motivation to avoid potentially undesired outcomes. Finally, results showed that among those who base their self-worth on social evaluations, as is the case with honor, insults have a more negative impact on cognitive and emotional self-concerns. These findings together highlight that insults evoke more negative appraisals among those concerned with honor, due the fact that their self-worth is based on other's approval.

Insult and the process of conflict development

Moreover, our results show that honor instigates prevention focus in the face of a confrontational situation, because people are invested in dealing with the conflict but also want to avoid potential threats to their honor. The current findings offer an exciting new perspective on conflict emergence and conflict management as well as relevant underlying mechanisms. That is, they reveal that the concern with the maintenance and protection of honor has consequences for the initial willingness to engage in a potentially conflictual situation, as well as the way the situation is managed after being offended. Hence, when honor is a major concern, the initial approach to an emerging conflict consists of de-escalatory actions. In different studies, I found that prior to being offended or in the absence of insulting feedback, those high in honor are actually less aggressive and even more obliging than individuals for whom honor concerns are less salient. The more obliging side of honor prior to conflict escalation has been observed in previous research (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996). However, it has only recently received attention (Harinck, et al., 2013; Leung & Cohen, 2011), because most of the previous research has focused on reactions after being insulted.

The pattern of obliging behavior in the initial stages of conflict development was particularly evident in the study reported in chapter three, which focused on the process of conflict development and conflict escalation.

The findings reported here, which link obliging responses to prevention focus, clearly highlight the notion that those high in honor are more sensitive to the negative psychological ramifications of offensive behavior and operate in ways to avoid these outcomes. Apparently, the purpose of this approach is to prevent the conflict from becoming overt and escalating to a point where both parties have no option but to engage in destructive measures to defend their honor. However, initial obliging behavior might be misinterpreted by those who are unaware of its true purpose, because it does not explicitly communicate that a person is actually in a vigilant state of mind. Therefore, once the confrontation evokes a sudden forceful response, it seems like this response is radical and inexplicable. In this regard, the current findings are important, because they not only demonstrate behavior that is observable at the surface, but also reveal the underlying mechanism involved in the process prior to conflict escalation.

The reactions following insulting behavior observed throughout this dissertation were in line with previously reported findings. That is, in line with standard accounts (Beersma, et al., 2003; Cohen, et al., 1996; Cohen, et al., 1999; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b; Van Osch, et al., 2013), I observed that those high in honor tend to exhibit higher levels of aggression after being insulted. These reactions pertained to honor endorsement resulting from intercultural differences, interpersonal differences, as well as after an experimental manipulation of honor. Interestingly, we found that aggressive responses are also associated with higher levels of prevention focus. The link between prevention focus and aggression qualifies the aggression, showing that this response is not offensive but defensive in nature. After being insulted, the prevention goal of not losing honor is thwarted and requires action to restore this loss.

As preventions goals are considered necessities, they can have severe psychological consequences when they are not met, resulting in agitation and anxiety (Higgins, 1996, 1997; Sassenberg, et al., 2007). Recent research has shown that people will go to great lengths to accomplish their prevention goals

and they are even prepared to use aggression if required to do so (Sassenberg & Hansen, 2007; Scholer, et al., 2010; Zaal, et al., 2011). Such is also the case with honor. Once it has been threatened, it requires and justifies aggressive responses to restore it, since maintaining one's honor is truly a necessity. In this light, I also found that after exhibiting aggression, those concerned with honor were better able to let go of their agitation. Thus people can let go of their agitation once they have defended their honor by aggression, restoring their prevention goals. Again, these findings reveal that aggressive responses serve a prevention goal, as agitation is considered an emotion specific to failing to reach prevention goals. Together, these findings allow for a better understanding of why insults evoke more aggression among those concerned with honor and which purpose this behavior serves.

Preventing insult-elicited aggression

Despite the growing body of literature connecting honor to aggression, little is known about how this aggression can be prevented. The findings discussed in this dissertation offer important insights in this respect. As I demonstrated in different chapters, avoiding confrontations and threats to their honor is an effective way of insuring cooperative responses among those concerned with honor. Nevertheless, in conflict situations it might be particularly hard to avoid confrontations, even if they are not intended as such. Therefore, in Chapter 5, I set out to investigate which factor makes people with high concerns for honor more sensitive to the negative ramifications of offensive behavior. Results of this line of research identified socially-defined self-worth as an important factor in this respect. Results demonstrated that the more people rely on social evaluations as a source of self-worth, the more they suffer from cognitive self-devaluation and negative affect after being insulted. These findings are particularly relevant to honor, since honor is for a considerable part based on socially-defined worth — i.e. the value of a person in the eyes of others. Additionally, these findings also implicate that buffering socially-conferred worth might be an effective way in limiting or postponing the

need to respond aggressively to confrontations. Indeed, by affirming their social worth prior to an offensive interaction, I was able to postpone honor-culture participants' need to become aggressive after they were insulted. A traditional self-affirmation induction did not have the same beneficial effect compared to a control group with no affirmation at all. This outcome highlights the relative importance of socially-defined worth in understanding insult-elicited aggression among those high in honor (see also Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008). Moreover, it offers insights on what might be the focus of possible intervention aimed at preventing conflict escalation. These findings demonstrate, to my knowledge for the first time, that insult-elicited aggression is not only insurmountable for those concerned with honor, but also how it can be prevented.

Practical implications

Conflict management

The findings discussed in this dissertation also have important practical implications for cross-cultural communication and conflict management. One highly relevant discovery is that those concerned with honor use different strategies to deal with conflicts than those concerned with dignity. Although previous research on honor values has highlighted aggressive reactions displayed by those with high honor values in response to conflict situations, current findings show that people endorsing honor norms will more likely *avoid* situations that potentially threaten their honor. When possible, they will therefore try to refrain from overt conflict engagement so as to avoid confrontations that may end up in a clash over one's honor. People endorsing dignity norms are less concerned with threats to their self-worth resulting from confrontational encounters with others. Therefore, they are more likely to engage in a direct conflict management strategy, such as competing, pursuing own goals, and engaging in problem solving (for a review, see Holt & DeVore, 2005). This proactive style of conflict management might be ineffective or even counterproductive when dealing with people from honor cultures. Particularly

confrontational or overt conflict behavior may evoke the need to protect or restore one's honor by means of destructive reactions. Accordingly, an approach that takes into account honor culture members' specific relational needs, in terms of respect and honor, and reciprocates cooperative intentions may be more effective.

Furthermore, findings of the studies in this dissertation also show that even when they use the same conflict strategies as non-honor culture members, honor culture members might signal something else by it. For example, our findings pertaining to the initial de-escalation of an emerging conflict showed that early concession making does not mean that people are not concerned about their own interests and goals. In fact, results showed that activating honor made people more aware that they had something to lose, resulting in the willingness to be more cooperative and avoid conflict escalation. On the other hand, insult-elicited aggression is not competitive in nature, as it does not aim to further conflict goals or personal interests. Rather, it is defensive in nature as aggression is driven by the same underlying regulatory focus and it serves to prevent loss of honor. In order to know how to effectively manage conflicts involving honor culture members, it is important to understand what motivates their behavior in a given context. The observed behavior alone might not be an accurate indication of what is actually going on.

Interventions

Additionally, the current findings suggest that when honor is salient, different conflict stages require different interventions to ease the process of conflict resolution. Honor-related concerns result in appeasing behavior and avoidance of competition in the initial stages of an encounter. If not responded to in the right way, for example by reciprocating a favor or giving space, these honor-related concerns may be thwarted resulting in even more frustration. However, avoiding the conflict at hand altogether may be detrimental in the long run, because nothing is actually resolved. In order to promote active conflict engagement, without risking destructive reactions to confrontations,

affirmation tactics might be effective in buffering self-related concerns associated with honor. The goal of such an intervention would be to make people less sensitive to the negative consequences of confrontations that they may consider offensive. As a result, they are able to endure longer before reaching the point at which they feel they should retaliate. The findings of Chapter 5 provide initial evidence for this notion and show that a social affirmation is effective in postponing the need to become aggressive in response to offensive feedback. Additionally, results of this chapter showed that traditional self-affirmation procedures, which rely on boosting self-esteem, might not be an effective way of reducing aggression after an insult among participants high in honor might not be. Apparently, socially-defined self-worth might fuel the need to respond more aggressively when it is accompanied by a high level of self-esteem.

However, different interventions need to be considered once a conflict escalates past the breaking point. This stage of conflict is characterized by the need to restore one's damaged honor, often by means of retaliatory aggression towards the transgressor. At this point, interventions that aim to prevent one's honor from being damaged are no longer effective. Other interventions should be considered to help restore the damaged honor. A method that might be effective at this point is an apology. An apology is a message that conveys an admission of guilt and regret by the transgressor and it may also involve the desire to restore the sustained damage to continue the relationship (Tomlinson, Dineen, & Lewicki, 2004). Apologies have been shown to restore the moral character of the perpetrator (Gold & Weiner, 2000) and restore the social identity (Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989) of the person perpetrated against. Therefore, apologies are likely to be effective in diminishing the need to retaliate a transgression, providing that the apology is sincere (Ohbuchi, et al., 1989; Tomlinson, et al., 2004; Zechmeister, Garcia, Romero, & Vas, 2004). Based on findings discussed in the current dissertation, showing that moral concerns and social worth are two central aspects of honor, an apology might be

particularly promising in reducing insult-elicited aggression among those concerned with honor. The effectiveness of apologies in reducing insulting elicited aggression specifically should also be investigated empirically in future research.

Strengths, limitations and future directions

In four empirical chapters, I discussed different lines of research investigating the underlying psychological mechanisms explaining why people concerned with honor respond differently when offended and what can be done to prevent this response. Each chapter is followed by an extensive discussion of possible strengths and limitations specific to that chapter. For the purpose of the current reflection, I will focus on a number of issues that address overlapping strengths and limitations.

One strength of this research is that I employed a multi-method approach to address the research questions. For example, I used correlational studies to link differences in —intercultural and interpersonal— honor endorsement to self-reported emotions and cognitions following insults. However, correlations do not allow for causal inference about the impact of insults on the observed patterns. Therefore, I reassessed the same research questions in experiments, using hypothetical situations in which people had to imagine being insulted or not and indicate their emotions and intentions. Still, self-report measures only reflect intentions, which may not always be in line with actual behavior, particularly in heated situations like conflicts. Hence, in other studies I used controlled offenses to insult participants who were unaware of the true purpose of the study and assessed cardiovascular patterns and behavioral indicators of aggression. This approach adds to the validity of the findings across different samples and in different contexts.

Of considerable interest in this respect is that, besides considering honor as a cultural phenomenon, I developed an experimental manipulation to activate or deactivate honor in a mono-cultural sample of participants. This is a novel approach that allows for the examination of honor as a situational factor and

permits causal inferences directly related to honor endorsement. Additionally, it isolates the impact of honor from other social confounds, such as financial and societal status, belonging to an ethnic minority group and language barriers. This attempt to causally link findings directly to honor endorsement has been lacking in previous research, where honor endorsement is sometimes assumed and generalized based on ethnic background.

One limitation of the current research is that when using multi-cultural samples, the dignity group was usually very homogenous — consisting of Dutch participants — , while the honor group was fairly heterogeneous — mainly consisting of Turkish and Moroccans, but sometimes also other ethnicities. This method was sometimes necessary as the number of Turkish and Moroccans participants alone was not enough to ensure satisfactory honor-culture-sample sizes, but may have introduced additional error in our honor culture sample. Additionally, although all honor culture participants included in the analyses were from an honor culture background, most of them had grown up in the Dutch society. As a result, their cultural values had integrated at least to some extent with Dutch culture, making honor-related characteristics less noticeable in this sample. A such, it is recommended that the findings discussed in this dissertation should be replicated in future research among more homogeneous groups of honor culture members.

At this point, I note that the field of social psychology has gone through rapid changes during the past years, in particular regarding research practices and methods. An important development relates to the desire to avoid false positives, which has resulted in changing practices with respect to interpretation of significance levels around $p = .05$. Another important change is that more importance is now placed on a priori power analyses for the purpose of participant sampling. However, most of the studies described in this dissertation were conducted, written up and submitted for publication before these changes came about. Moreover, my research involves cultural groups that are not easily accessible - especially within academic environments - and complicated data

collection techniques. Both these features make it difficult to obtain sample sizes that would be ideal from a statistical point of view. Nevertheless, especially because it is relatively difficult to gain access to this target group for research purposes, there is added value in considering the potential implications of observations made, even if these were obtained with relatively small participant samples and were sometimes only marginally significant. This is why I have discussed these findings and their possible implications within the context of this dissertation. Of course, caution should be practiced in generalizing conclusions from these findings, and the robustness of the patterns observed here should still be established in future research using larger sample sizes to ensure sufficient statistical power.

The current research offers interesting new perspectives on why insults have such destructive effects on conflict management when honor is at stake and how these effects might be diminished. Nevertheless, future research could more thoroughly consider methods that may help prevent or resolve honor related conflicts. Chapter five of this dissertation, that examines the effect of a social affirmation on insult-elicited aggression, is a first step in this direction. However, it is yet unclear whether the additional effect of a social affirmation is only specific to honor cultures, or that it pertains to affirmations in general, also in dignity cultures. Although theory suggests that it is not, because self-worth is defined more internally in such contexts, it is important to assess this point empirically. Additionally, the current intervention pertains to insults administered through chat messages and aggression in the context of a laboratory setting. Though promising, this knowledge has yet to be transformed into specific interventions that are applicable in real-life conflicts. Applied research in the field of conflict management should be considered to take the interventions beyond the laboratory setting and assess the effectiveness of different interventions in real-life settings.

Additionally, the current findings do not yet provide information about ways to reduce anger and aggression once conflicts have escalated past the

breaking point, where a party feels that honor has been lost and needs to be restored. The current findings together with research on apologies do suggest that apologies may be particularly effective in this respect, Unfortunately, knowledge about the effect of apologies in different cultures is scarce (Merolla, Zhang, & Sun, 2013; Shariati & Chamani, 2010). Therefore, more research is required to formulate recommendation for this specific stage of conflict resolution in respect to honor-related concerns.

Finally, future research should also consider the positive side of honor endorsement. As stated before in Chapter 5, almost the entire body of literature examining honor has focused on aggression or retaliation. This paints a rather one-sided picture of the characteristics and function of honor. However, anthropological findings highlight the notion that in general, honor culture members are gracious, friendly, and hospitable (Gilmore, 1987; Peristiany, 1965). They are proud, have high concerns for personal integrity, and go to great lengths to pay back dues. However, these and other positive observation associated with honor have never been seriously investigated in social psychological research. Only recently, some researchers have started doing research in this area. For example, Harinck and colleague's also showed that in the absence of offensive encounters honor culture members actually prefer more cooperative conflict management styles than dignity culture members (Harinck, et al., 2013). Additionally, Leung and Cohen demonstrated that honor culture members will show more effort to payback a favor and cheat less (Leung & Cohen, 2011). In order to have a clear and full understanding of the function of honor and its influence on social psychological processes and behavior, the positive side of honor has to be considered as well.

Conclusion

The discoveries made in the context of this dissertation paint a more balanced picture of the role of honor in conflict management and inform us on possible avenues of effective conflict intervention. I demonstrated that the moral imperative of treating others with respect is a core concern in honor cultures and

insults are considered more of a moral violation of this norm among those high in honor. As honor is the worth of an individual predominantly based on their value in the eyes of other, insults are more likely to threaten self-worth than when people endorse dignity. Therefore, in the face of potential conflicts, preventing loss of honor becomes a major concern. This concern initially results in more appeasing and less dominating conflict management styles to prevent conflict escalation. Nevertheless, if confrontations or offensive behavior persist, the same concern may evoke more aggressive reactions. One way to avert this reaction is by affirming the social worth of those concerned with honor, in order to postpone the point at which people feel the need to defend their honor by means of aggression. Such interventions may help advance the process of intercultural negotiation and conflict resolution before they escalate.

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Samenvatting

De toenemende globalisering heden ten dage zorgt ervoor dat mensen met verschillende culturele achtergronden frequent met elkaar in contact komen. Multiculturalisme biedt uitdagingen met betrekking tot het delen van kennis, tradities en gewoontes, maar kan er ook toe leiden dat verschillende normen en waarden met elkaar in botsing komen. Eerder onderzoek heeft namelijk aangetoond dat meningsverschillen die gebaseerd zijn op tegengestelde normen en waarden moeilijker op te lossen zijn dan conflicten die gebaseerd zijn op tegengestelde materiele belangen (Harinck & De Dreu, 2004; Kouzakova, et al., 2012). Het is daarom belangrijk om te weten of culturele waardestelsels van elkaar verschillen en hoe we deze verschillen kunnen overbruggen. Twee culturele waardestelsels waar recent onderzoek naar is gedaan in het kader van conflicten zijn eercultuuren en waardigheidsculturen.

Eercultuuren komen veelal voor in Latijns Amerika, het gebied rond de Middellandse zee en het Midden-Oosten (Cohen, et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2000; Uskul, et al., 2012). In dergelijke samenlevingen is het hebben èn behouden van eer van essentieel belang voor deelname aan het sociale leven. Eer draait om de waarde van een individu in zijn of haar ogen, maar ook in de ogen van de omgeving (Pitt-Rivers, 1965). Dat wil zeggen dat in eercultuuren het hebben van een goed imago en het geven en krijgen van respect centraal staat in het dagelijkse leven. Eer geeft een individu bestaansrecht. Daartoe is het essentieel dat men zich houdt aan de erecode (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002b). De erecode bestaat uit algemeen heersende normen en gedragsregels, die specifieke omgangsvormen in sociale interacties voorschrijven en daarmee het dagelijkse leven in eercultuuren reguleren. Deze normen hebben betrekking op het in stand houden van de familie-reputatie, normen rondom persoonlijke integriteit, reciprociteit en sociale cohesie evenals gender specifieke normen. Wie zich niet aan deze regels en voorschriften houdt loopt het risico op sociale afkeuring en directe vergelding, wat tot eerverlies en verstoting kan leiden. Eer is daarom een kostbaar goed dat kan worden

verkregen maar ook verloren kan gaan of door anderen kan worden ontnomen (Gilmore, 1987; Peristiany, 1965).

Waardigheidsculturen komen voor in wat bekend staat als Westerse samenlevingen zoals in Noord-Amerika en West-Europa (Cohen, et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2000; Uskul, et al., 2012). Het centrale idee in dit waardenstelsel is dat ieder individu dezelfde waardigheid bezit, die aan hem/haar wordt toegekend bij de geboorte en gelijk is aan die van ieder ander. Deze waardigheid is inherent aan hem/haar bij de geboorte en onafhankelijk van het oordeel van naderen (Ayers, 1984; Leung & Cohen, 2011). Daarmee is waardigheid als bron van zelfwaarde minder vergankelijk dan eer, omdat het niet verloren kan gaan of kan worden afgepakt. In waardigheidsculturen worden sociale interacties gereguleerd door geïnternaliseerde morele standaarden, terwijl men tegen overtredingen wordt beschermd door een effectief opererend rechtssysteem. Reciprociteit is in deze culturen ook belangrijk, maar neemt minder strikte vormen aan dan in eerculturen. Andere waarden die in deze culturen centraal staan zijn autonomie, individuele prestaties en persoonlijke verantwoordelijkheid (Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2002a).

Voorgaand onderzoek heeft vooral gekeken naar hoe mensen uit een eercultuur reageren op beledigende situaties en hoe zij hierin verschillen van mensen uit een waardigheidscultuur. Verschillende onderzoeken hebben aangetoond dat mensen uit een eercultuur na een belediging meer boosheid ervaren, meer dominantie tentoonspreiden en meer gericht zijn op agressie dan mensen uit een waardigheidscultuur (Cohen, et al., 1996; Cohen, et al., 1999; Rodriguez Mosquera, et al., 2008; Van Osch, et al., 2013). Er is echter weinig empirisch onderzoek gedaan naar *waarom* mensen uit een eercultuur zo reageren en welke psychologische mechanismen aan deze reacties ten grondslag liggen. Bovendien is er niets bekend over hoe deze reacties kunnen worden voorkomen. Het onderzoek in dit proefschrift probeert antwoord te geven op deze twee vragen. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om eergerelateerde verschillen in conflict gedrag beter te begrijpen en op basis hiervan methodes te

ontwikkelen, die kunnen bijdragen aan het voorkomen en oplossen van interculturele conflicten.

In vier verschillende onderzoekslijnen heb ik onderzocht waarom mensen die eerwaarden aanhangen bozer reageren op beledigingen en wat er gedaan kan worden om dit te voorkomen. Globaal bezien heb ik onderzocht wat de invloed is van eer op de perceptie en beoordeling van beledigingen, welke rol eer speelt in het proces van conflict escalatie en hoe agressieve reacties op beledigingen kunnen worden voorkomen. In wat volgt zal ik de belangrijkste bevindingen in vogelvlucht doornemen en de implicaties van deze bevindingen bespreken.

Hoofdstuk 2

In Hoofdstuk 2 van dit proefschrift heb ik onderzocht wat de invloed is van eerwaarden op de perceptie van beledigingen. Onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat moraliteit en competentie twee centrale domeinen van sociale percepties zijn (Ellemers, et al., 2008; Leach, et al., 2007; Wojciszke, 2005). Een belediging kan worden gezien als een manier om iemands eer en goede naam aan te tasten door zijn moraliteit dan wel competentie in twijfel te trekken (Bond & Venus, 1991). In twee studies heb ik deelnemers gevraagd om naar aanleiding van verschillende beledigingen te evalueren in welke mate dit hun gevoel van moraliteit dan wel competentie aantast. In Studie 2.1 dienden de deelnemers de belediger te evalueren, in Studie 2.2 dienden zij zichzelf te evalueren na beledigd te zijn. Beide studies lieten zien dat beledigingen bij mensen met hogere eerwaarden sterker de moraliteit aantasten, ten opzichte van competentie, dan bij mensen met lage eerwaarden. Dit effect van eerwaarden op sterkere moraliteitsoordelen werd in beide onderzoeken gemedieerd door de mate waarin men beledigingen beledigend vond. Deze resultaten laten zien dat beledigingen bij mensen met hoge eerwaarden meer worden gemoraliseerd, omdat beledigingen als een sterkere overtreding van omgangsnormen rondom respect en eerbied worden beschouwd.

Hoofdstuk 3

In Hoofdstuk 3 heb ik de relatie tussen eer en de beoordeling van beledigingen in een competitieve situatie onderzocht. Zo heb ik onderzocht of een experimentele activatie van eerwaarden — in vergelijking tot activatie van waardigheid— leidt tot een sterkere fysiologische bedreiging en een sterkere uiting van daadwerkelijke agressie na beledigd te zijn. Deelnemers werden, buiten hun weten om, door een niet bestaande andere deelnemer gedurende een computer taak verbaal beledigd. De mate van bedreiging dan wel uitdaging werd, in overeenstemming met het Biopsychosociale model (Blascovich, 2000; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996), gemeten aan de hand van cardiovasculaire indicatoren zoals hartslag, bloeddruk en impedantie. Agressie werd gemeten aan de hand van een tweede taak waarop deelnemers de belediger konden bestraffen door middel van harde geluiden.

De resultaten toonden inderdaad aan dat bij deelnemers wier eer geactiveerd was beledigingen een staat van bedreiging opriepen. Er was echter meer sprake van uitdaging als ze niet werden beledigd. Deze reactie was specifiek voor de eeractivatie, aangezien het patroon van bedreiging en uitdaging omgekeerd was bij deelnemers bij wie waardigheid geactiveerd was. Daarnaast toonden beledigde deelnemers bij wie eer geactiveerd was de hoogste mate van agressie. De niet-beledigde deelnemers bij wie eer geactiveerd was toonden echter de laagste mate van agressie. Deze resultaten tonen aan dat beledigingen, naast agressie, ook een staat van bedreiging oproepen bij mensen wier eer op het spel staat. Dit geldt echter alleen voor wanneer ze beledigd zijn. In lijn met bevindingen uit eerder onderzoek, lieten ook onze resultaten zien dat mensen die sterk aan eer hechten juist welwillender en minder agressief zijn dan mensen die aan waardigheid hechten, zolang ze niet beledigd worden (Cohen, et al., 1996; Harinck, et al., 2013; Leung & Cohen, 2011).

Hoofdstuk 4

De twee voorgaande hoofdstukken laten duidelijk zien dat beledigingen een grotere psychologische impact hebben op mensen wanneer hun eer op het

spel staat. In Hoofdstuk 4 heb ik onderzocht hoe deze bevindingen het proces van conflict ontwikkeling en conflict escalatie beïnvloedt. Ik heb daarbij ook gekeken welke onderliggen psychologische mechanismen aan dit proces ten grondslag liggen. Ik heb meer specifiek de rol van preventie focus onderzocht. Volgens de Regulatiefocus Theorie (Higgins, 1997) zullen mensen die vooral op het voorkomen van verlies gericht zijn zich laten leiden door preventie focus. Zij streven ernaar om nadelige uitkomsten te voorkomen en zullen geagiteerd raken of zelfs agressief reageren wanneer dit niet lukt (Sassenberg & Hansen, 2007; Scholer, et al., 2010; Zaal, et al., 2011). Een conflict situatie brengt ook het risico op eerverlies met zich mee. Aangezien eerverlies te allen tijde moet worden voorkomen, zullen zij die aan eer hechten zich ook in potentiele conflict situaties sterk laten leiden door preventie focus. In drie studies heb ik gekeken naar de relatie tussen eerwaarden, preventiefocus en hun invloed op conflict gedrag voor en na escalatie als gevolg van beledigingen.

Studie 4.1 toonde aan dat chronische preventie focus hoger was bij mensen uit een eercultuur dan mensen uit een waardigheidscultuur. Studie 4.2 toonde aan dat een experimentele activatie van eerwaarden ook leidde tot meer activatie van preventie strategieën, in vergelijking tot deactivatie van eerwaarden. Bovendien leidde activatie van eerwaarden in eerste instantie ook tot meer coöperatieve en minder competitieve intenties in een situatie met tegengestelde belangen. De relatie tussen eeractivatie en coöperatief gedrag werd gemedieerd door preventie strategieën. Studie 4.3 toonde tot slot aan dat activatie van eerwaarden tot meer agressie leidde na een beledigende confrontatie. De verhoogde mate van agressie hing bij mensen met eerwaarden ook samen met verhoogde agitatie — een emotie kenmerkend voor preventie focus (Higgins, 1997). Deze resultaten verduidelijken niet alleen het proces van conflict escalatie wanneer eer op het spel staat. Ze identificeren ook preventie focus als een potentiële onderliggende psychologische mechanisme. Zoals blijkt is preventie van eerverlies een belangrijke zorg voor mensen die eerwaarden aanhangen. Deze zorgen leiden in de verschillende fases van een conflict tot

ander gedrag. Wanneer een potentieel conflict zich voordoet zullen mensen die aan eer hechten aanvankelijk proberen de-escalerend te handelen om een bedreigende situatie te vermijden. Echter, na beledigd te zijn leiden diezelfde zorgen ertoe dat zij zich agressiever op stellen, teneinde eerverlies te beperken of te herstellen.

Hoofdstuk 5

De voorgaande hoofdstukken tonen aan dat mensen die aan eer hechten doorgaans gevoeliger zijn voor de negatieve gevolgen van beledigingen en confrontaties dan mensen die minder aan eer hechten. Daarmee geven zij een mogelijke verklaring voor waarom mensen die aan eer hechten met meer boosheid en agressie reageren nadat zij beledigd zijn. In Hoofdstuk 5 onderzocht ik wat deze gevoeligheid veroorzaakt. Deze kennis is van belang bij het ontwikkelen van methodes om eergerelateerde agressie na beledigingen te voorkomen. Eer is gedefinieerd als de waarde van een individu in zijn eigen ogen, maar ook in de ogen van anderen (Gilmore, 1987; Pitt-Rivers, 1965). In dit hoofdstuk onderzocht ik of de gevoeligheid voor beledigingen veroorzaakt wordt door de bron van zelfwaarde, ofwel dat zelfwaarde intern (persoonlijk) of extern (sociaal) wordt bepaald (Studie 5.1). Daarnaast onderzocht ik ook of het affirmeren van persoonlijke dan wel sociale zelfwaarde agressieve reacties op beledigingen onder mensen uit een eercultuur kan verminderen (Studie 5.2).

De resultaten van Studie 5.1 toonden aan dat mensen die hun zelfwaarde meer baseren op sociale evaluaties (zoals bij eer het geval is) zichzelf meer devalueren en meer boosheid ervaren na een belediging, dan mensen die hun zelfwaarde intern definiëren. Studie 5.2 toonde bovendien aan dat een affirmatie procedure, die de sociale waarde van het individu bevestigt, effectief is in het reduceren van agressieve reacties op beledigingen onder deelnemers uit een eercultuur. Een traditionele zelf-affirmatie die de persoonlijke zelfwaarde bevestigt had dit agressie-reducerende effect niet onder deelnemers uit een eercultuur. Deze twee studies samen tonen aan dat eer, mensen gevoeliger maakt voor de negatieve consequenties van beledigingen voor het zelfbeeld.

Daarnaast biedt dit hoofdstuk ook een opzet voor het ontwikkelen van een praktische interventie, die de noodzaak voor het agressief beschermen van de eer als reactie op een belediging vermindert.

Conclusie

De bevindingen van dit proefschrift schetsen een genuanceerder beeld van de invloed van eerwaarden op conflict gedrag en vormen een basis voor mogelijke interventies om eergerelateerde conflicten te beheersen. De resultaten tonen aan dat de morele norm van het elkaar met respect behandelen in eerculturen meer centraal staat waardoor beledigingen meer als een schending van die norm worden ervaren in vergelijking tot waardigheidsculturen. Omdat de eer, ofwel de zelfwaarde van mensen in eerculturen mede gebaseerd is op wat anderen van hen vinden, zullen beledigingen hun eer eerder bedreigen. In waardigheidsculturen is dit niet het geval, aangezien in deze culturen de zelfwaarde van een individu niet afhangt van het oordeel van anderen. Daarom is het voorkomen van eerverlies een belangrijke zorg voor mensen uit eerculturen, zeker in situaties die snel uit kunnen lopen op een openlijke confrontatie, zoals in conflicten. Deze zorg voor het voorkomen van eerverlies leidt aanvankelijk tot meer inschikkelijkheid en het vermijden van een openlijke confrontatie. Maar als het provocerende gedrag aanhoudt, zal dezelfde zorg ook meer agressie oproepen bij mensen uit een eercultuur om de negatieve gevolgen voor hun eer te beperken of te herstellen. Een manier om dergelijke reacties te voorkomen is door de sociale waarde van mensen die aan hun eer hechten te affirmeren, zodat de behoefte om schade aan hun eer met agressie te herstellen uitgesteld kan worden. Een dergelijke interventie kan het oplossen van eergerelateerde conflicten bespoedigen.

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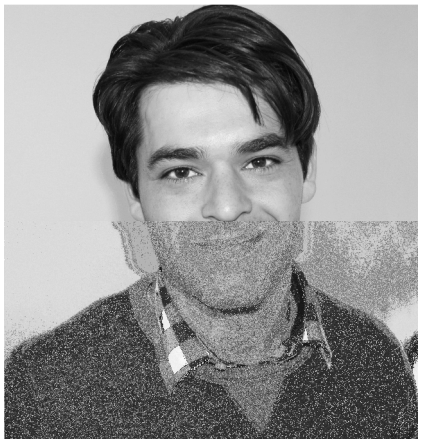
Curriculum Vitae



Saïd Shafa was born on the 2nd of September 1981, in Teheran, Iran. He moved to the Netherlands at the age of nine and attended high school at the Johan de Witt-Gymnasium in Dordrecht. Having been interested in the workings of the human psyche from an early age, Saïd started studying Psychology at Leiden University in 2001. Prior and after his graduation in Social and Organizational Psychology in 2007, he was employed at an HRM consultancy firm for over 4 years. Temporarily, Saïd quit his job in 2008 for seven months to travel the world. During the final year of his employment, he led the Research and Development division of the firm. His interest for psychological research was triggered during this period. In December 2009, Saïd started a PhD project at Leiden University, under supervision of Prof. Dr. Naomi Ellemers, Dr. Fieke Harinck, and Dr. Bianca Beersma. The current dissertation comprises the research conducted in this project, which also resulted in several national and international publications and presentations. Currently, Saïd is appointed at Leiden University as a postdoctoral scholar, for which he acquired funding from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

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