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

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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.