



Fight or flight: Perceptions of men who confront versus ignore threats to themselves and others



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ABSTRACT

Masculine Honor (MH) describes a set of cultural beliefs by which men are expected to defend against threats, even if this defense requires the use of physical violence (e.g., Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). Previous research has identified what constitutes a threat and how MH moderates perceptions of these threats. However, little research has examined perceptions of men who confront versus fail to confront a threat to their masculinity. In two studies (N = 267) we examined whether MH moderated the relationship between whether a man confronted or walked away from a threat directed at himself (Study 1) and a threat directed at his significant other (Study 2) and perceptions of the man as manly (e.g., strong) and non-manly (e.g., weak). MH was associated with manly perceptions of men who choose to fight and non-manly perceptions of men who choose to walk away from threats. These results are consistent with previous research on MH which predicts that men should respond to threats or insults that are directed at them. And to do so, violence is sometimes necessary. Thus, individuals' adherence to MH predicts how they perceive violence as a tool for defending against threats and building and maintaining masculine reputations.

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"I have to win this now, and for all time, or I'll fight it every day and it will get worse and worse."

[–Ender Wiggin (*Ender's Game*, p. 7)]

The above quote is from a popular novel by Orson Scott Card written in 1985. In the first chapter of this book, a six year old boy named Ender Wiggin is confronted by a group of bullies led by a boy named Stilson. Ender defends himself by striking Stilson in the chest and then continues to beat Stilson to end not only the current fight, but to deter all future confrontations as well. It is in this way that Ender gains a social reputation as someone who is willing to fight until the threat is annihilated and is then recruited to save the Earth from "Buggers". This line of thinking is evident in cultures of honor (e.g., Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012; Nisbett, 1993, 1998; Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2000).

Much research has been conducted on masculine honor beliefs and perceptions of what is deemed as honorable behavior for men (e.g., Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Bosson, Vandello, Burnaford, Weaver & Wasti, 2009; Saucier & McManus, 2014; Vandello, Ransom, Hettinger, & Askeew, 2009). However, little research has been conducted on how

endorsement of these cultural values moderates perceptions of men who confront versus fail to confront a threat to their masculinity. Extending previous research, we examined whether Masculine Honor Beliefs (MHBS; Saucier et al., 2016) would affect perceptions of men who fought versus walked away from a threat to either themselves (Study 1) or their significant others (Study 2). Consistent with previous literature, we hypothesized that MHBS would be associated with more manly perceptions of men who choose to fight and more non-manly perceptions of men who choose to walk away from a threat.

1. Culture of honor

Cultures of honor (and in particular, the Southern culture of honor in the United States) are centered on the requirement of men responding to threat by any means necessary (e.g., Barnes et al., 2012; Nisbett, 1993, 1998; Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2000). In doing so, men build their reputation as someone who is not to be *messed with* and are able to enhance their status as a "manly man". As has been discussed in the literature, this manly reputation is a social construct in which status must be earned and demonstrated repeatedly to avoid losing honor and being repeatedly victimized (Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015; Saucier et al., 2016; Shafa, Harinck, Ellemers, & Beersma, 2015; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). There are many ways that men may demonstrate honor such as confronting threats to self, property, family, or significant other (Cohen &

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Nisbett, 1994, 1996), responding when insulted (Cohen and Nisbett, 1996; Saucier, Till, Miller, O'Dea, & Andres, 2015b), and even be demonstrated (Ijzerman & Cohen, 2011) and reliably evaluated (AUTHORS, in preparation) by the way that a man carries himself (e.g., posture), grooms himself (e.g., beard), and looks (e.g., muscular build).

One important way that masculine honor is demonstrated is through violence in response to threats or insults (Barnes, Brown, Lenes, Bosson, & Carvallo, 2014; Barnes et al., 2012; Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Cohen and Nisbett, 1996; Weaver et al., 2010). For example, Southerners are more accepting of physical violence than Northerners in the United States (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). However, as Cohen and Nisbett (1994) noted, there is a caveat to this difference in the acceptability of violence. Specifically, Southerners are not more accepting of violence generally. Instead, Southerners are more accepting of violence used to defend oneself, family, significant other, or property from harm or insult (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Harinck, Shafa, Ellemers, & Beersma, 2013; Hayes & Lee, 2005; Lopez & Emmer, 2002). Thus, the Southern culture of honor is built around the acceptability of instrumental violence with the intention of deterring threat. It is in this way that violence is seen as necessary, and even socially attractive (Hochstetler, Copes, & Forsyth, 2014; Vandello, Ransom, Hettinger, & Askew, 2009).

2. What constitutes a threat to masculine honor?

Much research has examined factors that should incite a response; typically beginning with a verbal confrontation, leading to a physical altercation if the threat is not diminished (e.g., Cohen & Nisbett, 1996; Harinck et al., 2013; Ijzerman, van Dijk, & Gallucci, 2007; Saucier et al., 2015b). This literature highlights the importance of responding to threats toward one's family, significant other, property, and reputation (Harinck et al., 2013; Ijzerman et al., 2007; Saucier and McManus, 2014) which may be as extreme of an offense as someone killing or raping a family member (Saucier, Strain, Hockett, & McManus, 2015a). However, the majority of the empirical literature focuses on lower level threats to masculine honor, such as insults, in examining what constitutes enough of a threat to honor for men to fight (Saucier et al., 2015b). For example, Nisbett (1993) describes the U.S. south as being more prone to violence in response to insult and demonstrated empirically that Southern men are willing to fight after being called an "ass-hole" (Cohen and Nisbett, 1996). Extending this research, Saucier et al. (2015b) examined insults that may increase the likelihood that a man will choose to fight after being targeted by them. In doing so, Saucier et al. (2015b) created a taxonomy of slurs, including "slurs against masculinity" (e.g., "bitch", "pussy"). Masculine honor beliefs significantly predicted participants' self-reported likelihood of fighting in response to being targeted by these slurs. Thus, this literature highlights an internal socialized obligation for men to respond physically when confronted with threats against their masculinity to maintain their reputation. However, previous literature has failed to directly examine whether endorsement of these cultural beliefs actually affects perceptions, by others, of men who confront versus fail to confront threats to their masculinity.

3. Overview of current studies

In the current studies we sought to extend previous research on masculine honor. Masculine honor consists of social expectations that govern men's behavior. Among these expectations is that men are to respond to threats against their family, significant other, property, or reputation. While much of the extant literature has examined the socialization of masculine honor and what is deemed a *threat* to masculine honor, little research has examined how men are actually perceived when they confront versus fail to confront a threat. In the current studies, we presented participants with a vignette in which men confront

versus walk away from a threat directed at themselves (Study 1) or their significant other (Study 2). We then examined whether masculine honor (as measured by the MHBS; Saucier et al., 2016) moderated perceptions of these men. Building on previous research, we hypothesized that participants' levels of masculine honor would be positively associated with manly perceptions of men who confronted the threat and positively associated with non-manly perceptions of men who walked away from the threat.

4. Study 1

Study 1 was conducted using a vignette in which a stranger at a bar walks up to a man, pours a drink on the man's head, and then laughs in his face. We manipulated whether the man punched the stranger or walked away. In doing so, we manipulated whether the individual confronted versus failed to confront a threat to his masculinity. We measured participants' perceptions of the man as manly versus non-manly and examined whether participants' levels of MHBS moderated perceptions of these men. Further, we examined whether participants' levels of MHBS predicted the extent to which participants perceived confrontation, non-confrontation, and the act of getting help from an outside source (e.g., police, bouncer) to be appropriate responses.

5. Method

5.1. Participants

One hundred forty-eight participants were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk software (MTurk) and completed the study online. Even though this is a study on masculine honor, we did not limit participation to men because we are interested in examining whether participants' endorsement of these beliefs as appropriate for men affects their perception of men. As such, men are not the only ones who evaluate men in society. Behavior is evaluated and socialized by men and women. Of our one hundred forty-eight participants, fourteen failed to complete the MHBS scale. Therefore, their responses were removed from data analysis. Three additional participants did not complete the demographics section. However, their data were retained due to their completing all other parts of the survey. Of the remaining 131 participants, there were 45 men and 83 women. Three participants identified their gender as "other". The majority of participants were White (59.1%), with the remaining participants being Black (10.1%), Hispanic (4.7%), Asian (8.7%), and Native American (2.0%). Three participants self-identified their race as "Other" (3.4%). Participants were compensated monetarily for their participation in the study. The average age of the participants was 33.86 ($SD = 10.39$).

5.2. Vignettes

The vignette used in the current study described an interaction between a man named Brian and a stranger outside of a sports bar. After Brian leaves the bar, the stranger pours a drink on Brian's head. The last sentence of the vignette was manipulated according to condition. Specifically, in one condition, Brian reacts by punching the stranger in the face, while in the other condition, Brian walks away to avoid an altercation. The complete vignette is below (The portion in brackets denotes the other condition).

It's gameday. Brian is watching the game and eating dinner with his friends at a local sports bar. It's a close game. Brian's team is down by 4, but with 10 seconds left on the clock they score the winning touchdown. Everyone at the bar cheers and Brian high-fives his friends. After the game ends, Brian's friends get up to leave so he pays his tab and leaves too. He is standing outside alone minding his own business when a man comes up, pours his drink on Brian's

head, and laughs. Brian punches the man in the face and the man falls down. Brian walks to his car and drives away [Not wanting any problems, Brian walks to his car and drives away].

5.3. Measures

Each of these measures was completed online. For each of these measures, a composite score was calculated by averaging participants' responses on each item to create a composite score where higher scores indicate higher levels of the construct being measured.

5.4. Manly perceptions of the man

We used a list of terms to examine manly perceptions of Brian. These terms were written with the intention of being consistent of what is considered manly in cultures of honor: *strong, leader, powerful, respectable, smart, reasonable, brave, proud, loyal, and honorable*. Participants were asked to identify how well these terms described Brian and responded on a 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) Likert scale. This scale was shown to be internally consistent ($\alpha = 0.94$, $M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.40$).

5.5. Non-manly perceptions of the man

We used a list of terms to examine non-manly perceptions of Brian. These terms were written with the intention of being consistent of what is considered non-manly in cultures of honor: *weak, embarrassing, and wimp*. Participants were asked to identify how well these terms described Brian and responded on a 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) Likert scale. This scale was shown to be internally consistent ($\alpha = 0.81$, $M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.51$).

5.6. Extent to which confronting is appropriate

We also examined how appropriate participants perceived confronting the stranger to be. We used two items: *Fight the man*, and *Yell at the man*. Participants responded to these items on a 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) Likert scale. Means, standard deviations, and reliabilities are presented in Table 1.

5.7. Extent to which not confronting is appropriate

We also examined participants' perceptions of the appropriateness of not confronting the stranger. We used two items: *Ignore the man* and *Walk away*. Participants responded to these items on a 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) Likert scale. Means, standard deviations, and reliabilities are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations between MHBS, should confront, should not confront, and should get help in Study 1.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. MHBS	5.46	1.42	(0.96)			
2. Should confront	4.10	1.60	0.43***	(0.73)		
3. Should not confront	5.34	1.55	-0.25**	-0.40**	(0.92)	
4. Should get help	4.99	1.56	-0.13	-0.07*	-0.01	(0.71)

Note. Bivariate correlations and Cronbach's alphas (in parentheses on the diagonal) for each of the measures are shown in the right half of the table.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

5.8. Extent to which getting help is appropriate

Lastly, participants were asked to rate how appropriate it would be to seek help in this situation. We used two items: *Get the bouncer* and *Call the cops*. Participants responded to these items on a 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) Likert scale.

5.9. Masculine honor beliefs

To examine participants' endorsement in masculine honor beliefs, we used the Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale (MHBS) created and validated by Saucier et al. (2016). Saucier et al. (2016) showed that this scale was internally consistent, temporally stable, demonstrated both convergent and discriminant validity, and strongly and uniquely predicted variance in individuals' responses to threats to one's honor above and beyond previous measures of honor beliefs. The scale consists of 35 items in which participants responded on a 1 (*Disagree very strongly*) to 9 (*Agree very strongly*) Likert type scale. This scale includes items such as *It is important for a man to be able to face danger* and *If a man does not defend himself, he is not a very strong man*. Means, standard deviations, and reliabilities are presented in Table 1.

5.10. Procedure

Participants signed up for the current study via Amazon's Mechanical Turk software. Participants began by reading an informed consent. Participants were then presented with one of the vignettes. Following the vignette, participants completed measures of manly and non-manly perceptions of the man, the extent to which confronting and not confronting is appropriate, the extent to which seeking help is appropriate, and then the Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale. Finally, participants completed a demographics section, were debriefed, and compensated for their participation.

6. Study 1 results

We examined whether participants' scores on the MHBS were associated with their perceptions of how appropriate it would have been for the man in the vignette to confront, not confront, and get help from police or a bouncer at the bar. The relationships among these variables are presented in Table 1. Consistent with hypotheses, MHBS significantly positively correlated with the extent to which participants thought it appropriate for a man to confront the antagonist who poured the drink on him in the vignette. Further, MHBS negatively correlated with the extent to which participants perceive it appropriate to not confront the antagonist. MHBS was not shown to correlate with the extent to which participants perceived that the man should call for help either from the bouncer or from the police.

We also examined whether the association between condition and manly and non-manly perceptions of the man in the vignette depended on participants' level of MHBS. For each of these models (manly or non-manly perceptions), a centered composite calculation of MHBS, condition (coded as chooses to walk away = 0, chooses to fight = 1), and the MHBS \times condition product term carrying the interaction were entered as predictors in a regression analysis. We will discuss the manly and non-manly dependent variables separately in the following sections.

6.1. Manly perceptions

The regression model testing the effects of MHBS, condition, and their interaction on manly perceptions of the man in the vignette is presented in Table 2. There was a significant MHBS \times condition interaction predicting manly perceptions of the man in the vignette. Specifically, there was a significant effect of condition projected at one standard deviation below the mean on MHBS such that men who chose to fight

Table 2
Regression model predicting manly perceptions of the man in the vignette in Study 1.

Predictor	β	SE	p	95% CI lower, upper
MHBS	0.06	0.07	0.458	−0.08, 0.20
Condition	−0.44	0.07	<0.001	−0.58, −0.30
MHBS × condition	0.39	0.07	<0.001	0.24, 0.54
Model $R^2 = 0.36$, $F(3, 130) = 23.96$, $p < 0.001$				
Interaction $R^2 = 0.14$, $F(1, 130) = 27.72$, $p < 0.001$				
Condition simple slopes × MHBS	β	SE	p	95% CI lower, upper
−1 standard deviation MHBS	−0.83	0.10	<0.001	−1.04, −0.62
+1 standard deviation MHBS	−0.05	0.10	0.63	−0.25, 0.15

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale; condition was entered as 0 = chooses to walk away, 1 = chooses to fight; coefficients are standardized.

were perceived significantly less manly than men who chose to walk away. However, consistent with our hypotheses, as levels of MHBS increased, so did manly perceptions of the man who chose to fight, while manly perceptions of the man who chose to walk away declined. As such, there was no significant effect of condition on manly perceptions of the man in the vignette projected at one standard deviation above the mean on MHBS.

6.2. Non-manly perceptions

The regression model testing the effects of MHBS, condition, and their interaction on non-manly perceptions of the man in the vignette are presented in Table 3. Again, there was a significant MHBS × condition interaction predicting non-manly perceptions of the man in the vignette. Similarly to the manly perceptions of the man, there was a significant effect of condition projected at one standard deviation below the mean on MHBS such that men who chose to fight were perceived significantly more non-manly than men who chose to walk away. However, consistent with our hypotheses, as levels of MHBS increased, non-manly perceptions of the man who chose to walk away also increased, while non-manly perceptions of the man who chose to fight decreased slightly. As a result, there was no significant effect of condition projected at one standard deviation above the mean on MHBS.

Together, these results indicate that MHBS is generally associated with more manly perceptions of men who choose to fight, and with more non-manly perceptions of men who choose to walk away from a threat directed at them. These results extend previous research on masculine honor beliefs by demonstrating the importance of masculine honor beliefs in predicting individuals' perceptions of men who choose to confront versus not confront a threat.

7. Study 2

We extended the results of Study 1 in a second study in which we examined participants' perceptions of a man who confronted versus

Table 3
Regression model predicting non-manly perceptions of the man in the vignette in Study 1.

Predictor	β	SE	p	95% CI lower, upper
MHBS	0.17	0.09	0.068	−0.01, 0.34
Condition	0.15	0.09	0.092	−0.02, 0.33
MHBS × condition	−0.22	0.09	0.014	−0.40, −0.05
Model $R^2 = 0.07$, $F(3, 130) = 3.36$, $p = 0.02$				
Interaction $R^2 = 0.04$, $F(1, 130) = 6.18$, $p = 0.01$				
Condition simple slopes × MHBS	β	SE	p	95% CI lower, upper
−1 standard deviation MHBS	0.37	0.13	0.004	0.12, 0.63
+1 standard deviation MHBS	−0.07	0.13	0.559	−0.32, 0.17

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale; condition was entered as 0 = chooses to walk away, 1 = chooses to fight; coefficients are standardized.

walked away from a threat directed at his significant other. Study 2 was conducted using a similar vignette as that used in Study 1. In the vignette, a stranger at a bar walks up to a man, pours a drink on his significant other's head (instead of on the man's head as in Study 1), and then laughs in the man's face. Again, we manipulated whether the man punched the stranger or walked away. We measured participants' perceptions of the man as manly versus non-manly and examined whether participants' level of MHBS moderated perceptions of the man who chose to punch the stranger or walk away. Further, we examined whether participants' level of MHBS predicted the extent to which they perceived confrontation, non-confrontation, and the act of getting help from an outside source (e.g., police, bouncer) to be appropriate responses.

8. Method

8.1. Participants

One hundred thirty-seven participants were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk software (MTurk) and completed the study online. As we explained in Study 1, even though this is a study on masculine honor, we did not limit participation to men because we are interested in examining whether participants' endorsement of these beliefs as appropriate for men affects their perception of men and their behavior. Four participants failed to complete the MHBS scale. Therefore, their responses were removed from data analysis. Four additional participants did not complete the demographics section. However, their data were retained due to their completing all other parts of the survey. Of the remaining 129 participants, there were 40 men and 89 women. The majority of participants were White (67.9%), with the remaining participants being Black (9.5%), Hispanic (5.8%), Asian (8.0%), and Native American (0.7%). Three participants self-identified their race as "Other" (2.2%). Participants were compensated monetarily for their participation in the study. The average age of the participants was 33.67 ($SD = 10.86$).

8.2. Vignettes

The same vignette used in Study 1 was used in Study 2 with the exception that instead of the stranger pouring the drink onto Brian, the stranger poured the drink on Brian's significant other. The new vignette is below (The portion in brackets denotes the other condition).

It's gameday. Brian is watching the game and eating dinner with his friends and his girlfriend Denise at a local sports bar. It's a close game. Brian's team is down by 4, but with 10 s left on the clock they score the winning touchdown. Everyone at the bar cheers and Brian high-fives his friends. After the game ends, Brian's friends get up to leave so he pays his tab and leaves the bar with Denise. They are standing outside minding their own business when a man comes up, pours his drink on Denise's head, and laughs. Brian punches the man in the face and the man falls down. Brian walks to his car and drives away [Not wanting any problems, Brian turns with Denise and they walk to his car and drive away].

8.3. Measures

As in Study 1, these measures were completed online. We used the same measures of manly perceptions of the man, non-manly perceptions of the man, extent to which confronting is appropriate, extent to which not confronting is appropriate, extent to which getting help is appropriate, and the Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale (Saucier et al., 2016). For each of these measures, a composite score was calculated by averaging participants' responses on each item to create a composite score where higher scores indicate higher levels of the construct being

Table 4

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations between MHBS, should confront, should not confront, and should get help in Study 2.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. MHBS	5.67	1.30	(0.95)			
2. Should confront	4.68	1.53	0.36***	(0.79)		
3. Should not confront	3.39	1.42	−0.23**	−0.41**	(0.83)	
4. Should get help	5.20	1.64	−0.03	−0.08*	0.16	(0.74)

Note. Bivariate correlations and Cronbach's alphas (in parentheses on the diagonal) for each of the measures are shown in the right half of the table.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

measured. Manly ($\alpha = 0.94$, $M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.45$) and non-manly ($\alpha = 0.89$, $M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.78$) perceptions of the man were again shown to be internally consistent. All other means, standard deviations, and reliabilities are shown in Table 4.

8.4. Procedure

An online study was distributed via Amazon's Mechanical Turk software. Participants began by reading an informed consent and were then presented with one of the vignettes. Participants then completed measures of manly and non-manly perceptions of the man, the extent to which confronting and not confronting is appropriate, the extent to which seeking help is appropriate, and then the Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale. Finally, participants completed a demographics section, were debriefed, and compensated for their participation.

9. Study 2 results

We examined whether participants' levels of MHBS were associated with their perceptions of how appropriate it would have been for the man in the vignette to confront, not confront, and get help from police or a bouncer at the bar. The relationships among these variables are presented in Table 4. Consistent with our hypotheses and Study 1, MHBS significantly positively correlated with the extent to which participants thought it appropriate for a man to confront the antagonist who poured the drink on his significant other in the vignette. Further, participants' scores on the MHBS were negatively correlated with the extent to which they perceived it to be appropriate to not confront the antagonist. Participants' scores on the MHBS were not correlated with the extent to which they perceived it would be appropriate for the man to call for help either from the bouncer or from the police.

We also examined whether the association between condition and manly and non-manly perceptions of the man in the vignette depended on participants' levels of MHBS. For each of these models (manly or non-manly perceptions), a centered composite calculation of MHBS, condition (coded as chooses to walk away = 0, chooses to fight = 1), and the MHBS \times condition product term carrying the interaction were entered as predictors in a regression analysis. We will discuss each dependent variable separately in the following sections.

9.1. Manly perceptions

The regression model testing the effects of MHBS, condition, and their interaction on manly perceptions of the man in the vignette is presented in Table 5. There was a significant MHBS \times condition interaction predicting manly perceptions of the man in the vignette. Specifically, there was no effect of condition projected at one standard deviation below the mean on MHBS. However, consistent with our hypotheses, there was a significant effect of condition projected at one standard deviation above the mean on MHBS such that a man who chose to fight was perceived significantly more manly than a man who chose to

Table 5

Regression model predicting manly perceptions of the man in the vignette in Study 2.

Predictor	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>CI</i> lower, upper
MHBS	0.12	0.08	0.12	−0.03, 0.27
Condition	0.30	0.08	<0.001	0.15, 0.45
MHBS \times condition	0.42	0.08	<0.001	0.27, 0.57
Model $R^2 = 0.27$, $F(3, 129) = 15.92$, $p < 0.001$				
Interaction $R^2 = 0.17$, $F(1, 129) = 30.82$, $p < 0.001$				
Condition simple slopes \times MHBS	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>CI</i> lower, upper
−1 standard deviation MHBS	−0.12	0.11	0.27	−0.33, 0.09
+1 standard deviation MHBS	0.73	0.11	<0.001	0.51, 0.94

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale; condition was entered as 0 = chooses to walk away, 1 = chooses to fight; coefficients are standardized.

walk away. Thus, similar to Study 1, MHBS is associated with greater endorsement of violence in response to threat.

9.2. Non-manly perceptions

The regression model testing the effects of MHBS, condition, and their interaction on non-manly perceptions of the man in the vignette are presented in Table 6. Again, there was a significant MHBS \times condition interaction predicting non-manly perceptions of the man in the vignette. There was no significant effect of condition projected at one standard deviation below the mean on MHBS. However, consistent with our hypotheses, there was a significant effect of condition projected at one standard deviation above the mean on MHBS such that the man who chose to fight was perceived as significantly less non-manly than the man who chose to walk away.

Across these two studies, we have extended previous research by directly examining whether endorsement of masculine honor beliefs affects perceptions, by others, of men who confront versus fail to confront threats to their masculinity in the form of a threat to their significant other. Our results indicate that participants' scores on the MHBS are associated with more manly perceptions of men who choose to fight, and more non-manly perceptions of men who choose to walk away, from a threat directed at their significant other.

10. General discussion

Previous research has described masculine honor as a social construct centered on the expectation that men behave in certain ways to earn and preserve their reputation as a "manly man" (e.g., Cohen & Nisbett, 1994, 1996; Hayes & Lee, 2005; Hochstetler et al., 2014; Saucier & McManus, 2014; Vandello et al., 2009). This type of reputation is coveted in regions of the world such as the American South where men, and women, are socialized via these expectations for male behavior. While much of this research has described what it takes to be a manly man or what is expected in cultures of honor, little research has directly examined whether the endorsement of these beliefs affects

Table 6

Regression model predicting non-manly perceptions of the man in the vignette in Study 2.

Predictor	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>CI</i> lower, upper
MHBS	0.02	0.07	0.81	−0.12, 0.16
Condition	−0.45	0.07	<0.001	−0.59, −0.31
MHBS \times condition	−0.40	0.07	<0.001	−0.54, −0.26
Model $R^2 = 0.36$, $F(3, 129) = 24.59$, $p < 0.001$				
Interaction $R^2 = 0.15$, $F(1, 129) = 31.27$, $p < 0.001$				
Condition simple slopes \times MHBS	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>CI</i> lower, upper
−1 standard deviation MHBS	−0.06	0.10	0.57	−0.25, 0.14
+1 standard deviation MHBS	−0.85	0.10	<0.001	−1.04, −0.65

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale; condition was entered as 0 = chooses to walk away, 1 = chooses to fight; coefficients are standardized.

perceptions of men who confront versus fail to confront a threat to their masculinity. Across two studies, we presented participants with vignettes in which a stranger approaches a man, dumps a drink on his (Study 1) or his significant other's (Study 2) head. We then manipulated whether the man confronted (i.e., fought) versus failed to confront (i.e., walked away) the stranger. Our results illustrate the importance of masculine honor in predicting individuals' responses to men's behavior. Specifically, our results showed that participants' levels of masculine honor beliefs were positively associated with manly perceptions of men who confronted the threat, and positively associated with non-manly perceptions of men who walked away from the threat.

11. Limitations

The current studies are not without limitations. Our measures of the perceptions of the man in the vignette as manly and non-manly, and perceptions of how appropriate it would have been for the man in the vignette to confront, not confront, or to get help from either police or a bouncer were created for the current study. Therefore, while these measures are face valid, none of these measures have undergone full validation. However, each of these measures was created using traits consistent with men in cultures of honor (e.g., brave), and the results of our studies are remarkably consistent between the two studies that endorsement of masculine honor ideologies significantly affects perceptions of men who confront versus fail to confront a threat to their masculinity. These studies were conducted online using Qualtrics software. As such, participants' perceptions of the man in the vignette may be stronger if they were to see the incident take place in a real life situation. An additional limitation of the current study that is related to the previous limitation is the lack of additional information in the vignette. Participants were not able to perceive size differentials between the man and the strangers (see resource holding power, e.g., Archer & Benson, 2008), or other factors that may have affected the men's willingness to stand up to the threat, such as if the stranger had friends around him. We would expect our results to generalize to a real life situation such that individuals' endorsement in masculine honor beliefs would affect their perceptions such that men who confront threats would be perceived more manly and men who do not confront would be perceived as more non-manly. Future research on other factors of the situation, such as size of the opponent, would be interesting to examine how these affect perceptions of men who confront versus fail to confront a threat to their masculinity. However, it is important to note that these perceptions of men as manly are not limited to one specific region in the world and they may change from person to person locally. Masculine honor is a continuous measure of the endorsement of beliefs that have been used to describe characteristics of individuals who perceive that response to threat is appropriate or even necessary. As such, it may not be as simple as, *respond in this way to gain honor and reputation*. Instead, men may experience conflicting motivations to both defend themselves, but to do so in a way that still projects a positive image. It is in the way honor remains a precarious reputational status that men seek, and win, through masculine demonstrations, but may lose if they fail to respond correctly to threat given the cultural norms for social behavior in which they are responding.

12. Contributions

The current studies have many implications in the area of masculine honor. Previous research has examined what is expected of men in honor cultures. However, these studies are among the first to directly investigate how participants' endorsement of masculine honor beliefs affects their perceptions of men who confront versus walk away from threat. Examining this from an evolutionary perspective, previous research has predicted that men may have evolved specific attributes to protect themselves from threat and to enhance their reputations (e.g., Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Shackelford, 2005). Interestingly, our current

studies demonstrate that the endorsement of masculine honor beliefs moderated perceptions of men who confronted versus failed to confront threats directed at themselves as well as their significant others. This suggests that the activation of such evolved mechanisms may require specific social contexts to trigger them. We hope that our findings will inspire future research into factors that affect perceptions of men and their behavior, as it is consistent with (or contradicts) the expectations for them dictated by masculine honor beliefs and the social expectations that men behave in ways consistent with these ideologies. Previous research has shown the importance of the socialization of masculine honor and our current studies provide a better understanding of the factors that lead to perceptions of men, which is important to understanding how, and why, men believe that they should confront threats to their masculinity.

13. Conclusion

Previous literature has investigated the relationships between masculine honor beliefs and men's perceptions of their own behavior and perceptions about what is appropriate behavior for men. However, previous literature fails to directly address the question of how men are perceived when they fail to act in ways that are consistent with masculine honor beliefs. Across two studies we demonstrated that individuals' masculine honor beliefs significantly moderated the association between a man's choice to confront or walk away from a threat, to himself or to his significant other, and their subsequent perceptions of the man. Specifically, masculine honor beliefs were associated with enhanced perceptions of a man who chose to confront a threat to his honor, and diminished perceptions of a man who chose not to confront a threat to his honor. Thus, not only is there an expectation for men to defend their honor, but social perceptions of men are dependent on their choice to, as Ender Wiggin had decided, confront the antagonist. The social perceptions earned by facing, and defeating, the threat may then win the man a reputation that serves not only to end the current fight, but to deter future confrontations as well.

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