



Conditional aggression: Perceptions of male violence in response to threat and provocation



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ABSTRACT

Masculine honor ideology refers to beliefs dictating men should defend against threats, often through violent responses. Research has shown masculine honor beliefs are associated with more positive perceptions of men who defend against threat and less positive perceptions of men who do not defend against threat. Across four studies, we extended these findings by examining whether, as a function of masculine honor beliefs, men are perceived more positively simply for being violent, or if their reputations are only enhanced when they respond violently to real threats. Further, we examined whether situational factors (size of the opponent, outcome of the fight, and whether their goal was achieved) affected perceptions of men as a function of masculine honor beliefs. Our results showed that as perceivers' masculine honor beliefs increase, they perceive men more positively when they confront threats, and when they win their fight, but not when they behave violently in general.

1. Introduction

Most boys are taught from a young age to be polite and interact with others in a respectful manner. However, in certain honor-based cultures, these teachings are more than mere suggestions. These *Cultures of Honor* have norms that dictate that men should adhere to a strict code of conduct in their treatment of others which corresponds to the treatment they expect to be afforded by others. If these expectations are not met, cultures of honor dictate swift reassertion of masculinity as a way for men to reclaim their reputation. One such Culture of Honor which has been extensively examined is in the American South. In the 18th century the Southern United States rapidly developed into a region which benefited economically from sheep herding. Northern states developed agricultural societies with crops being easily protected from theft, but Southern herdsmen needed to establish a tough reputation to ward off potential livestock thieves (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994).

This reputation is built by both preemptive and retaliatory responses to threats and insults (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Saucier, O'Dea, & Stratmoen, in press). We contend these motivations function as both a sword and a shield. As a sword, any threats to honor are dealt with swiftly, and often with violence as a way for men to reassert their masculinity (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). The reputation individuals establish for themselves by this immediate and decisive response toward any threat would then act as a shield fending off future threats from others. Likewise, the cultivation of this reputation also has influence over the physical appearance individuals present toward others (e.g.,

muscularity), with an emphasis on being seen as a “hard target”, such that their appearance functions as a shield to deter future threats (Saucier, O'Dea, et al., in press). Accordingly, violence as a response and deterrent to threats is more acceptable and, at times, expected in cultures of honor. We examined whether masculine honor beliefs are associated with increased endorsement of violence generally, or only in response to insults or threats directed at a man's masculinity. Further, we examined whether situational factors (e.g., the size of an opponent) and outcome variables (e.g., whether the man successfully wins the confrontation and whether he succeeds in defending against the threat) influence perceptions of men who defend others from threat. These questions have been understudied in the literature, with existing empirical studies largely focusing on analyzing archival data such as crime statistics between Northern and Southern regions in the United States (e.g., Cohen, 1998). Existing research has not taken into account the role of individual differences in masculine honor beliefs or aspects of the situation that may impact perceptions of men who respond violently to insults and threats.

1.1. Masculine honor as an ideology

By definition, the Southern Culture of Honor is described in terms of a regional difference compared to other regions of the United States. However, there has been a recent shift in the literature, such that researchers have begun to examine masculine honor ideology as an individual difference (Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012; Rodriguez

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Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2002; Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier & McManus, 2014; Saucier, O'Dea, & Strain, 2016). This research has explored the idea that while an individual may be socialized within a particular cultural context, ultimately the individual chooses whether to accept or reject the cultural values of a particular region (Leung & Cohen, 2011). As such, masculine honor ideologies transcend regional boundaries (Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, Miller, Martens, O'Dea, & Jones, in press; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016). From this expanding area of research, measures such as the Masculine Honor Belief Scale (MHBS; Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016) have been created to demonstrate individualized honor belief adherence. Masculine honor beliefs have been used as predictors of individuals' reactions and responses to threats, insults, rejections, and provocation, on both emotional (e.g., anger/shame) and behavioral (e.g., physical violence) levels (see Saucier, Miller, & O'Dea, submitted; Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012; O'Dea, Castro Bueno, & Saucier, 2017; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002; Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier & McManus, 2014; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016; Saucier, Till, Miller, O'Dea, & Andres, 2015; Vandello, Cohen, Grandon, & Franiuk, 2009).

Specifically, research has shown individuals higher in masculine honor beliefs express stronger negative attitudes toward rape and women who have been raped (Saucier, Strain, Hockett, & McManus, 2015), and prioritize the prevention and punishment of rape (Saucier, Martens, & Kubik, in preparation; Saucier, Strain, et al., 2015). Men higher in masculine honor have also been shown to take more risks (Barnes, Brown, & Tamborski, 2012), be more concerned with their masculinity (Saucier, O'Dea, et al., in press), and report higher incidents of depression (Osterman & Brown, 2011) while also having more negative perceptions of mental health services (Brown, Imura, & Mayeux, 2014). Osterman and Brown (2011) describe these effects as stemming largely from men failing to adhere to the norms of the Southern culture of honor in the American South due to a “hypersensitivity” to reputational failure. These measures have been shown to predict perceptions of men who respond physically to insults (e.g., O'Dea et al., 2017) and the self-reported likelihood of men themselves responding physically to insults (Saucier et al., submitted; Saucier, Till, et al., 2015). Further, individual differences in masculine honor beliefs explain differences in regional attitudes regarding the acceptance of aggression in response to insults, where violence is seen as more acceptable in the American South versus the American North (Saucier, Miller, et al., in press). Thus, it is clear masculine honor beliefs are important in predicting men's behaviors and attitudes toward a wide variety of outcomes.

1.2. Threats to masculine honor

Threats to masculine honor include intended harm or insult toward a man, his family, significant other, property, or reputation (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994, 1997). Threats may be extreme forms of violence such as the murder or rape of a significant other (Baaz & Stern, 2009) or attacks on personal property (e.g., theft and vandalism). However, threats may also be less extreme in nature such as insults targeted at an individual (e.g., Saucier et al., submitted; Saucier, Till, et al., 2015).

A man's reputation can be described as the way others view him based on his actions and dealings with others. The theory of precarious honor postulates the state of “being a man” is vulnerable. This masculinity can be enhanced as well as diminished by how his actions are perceived by others (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Threats and insults require decisive and aggressive responses from men (Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012; Harinck, Shafa, Ellemers, & Beersma, 2013) because manhood needs to be earned and continuously demonstrated to preempt future threats (Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Bosson, Vandello, Burnaford, Weaver, & Wasti, 2009; Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015; Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). In this manner, violence can serve as a tool not only to build a reputation, but also to defend or

reclaim honor, and for this reason, violence is viewed as necessary and encouraged (Hayes & Lee, 2005; Hochstetler, Copes, & Forsyth, 2014; Nisbett, 1993; Vandello, Ransom, Hettinger, & Askew, 2009; Weaver, Vandello, Bosson, & Burnaford, 2010). This violence in response to threat allows one to assert a sense of dominance over the opposing threat. Dominance is a social perception largely earned through demonstrations of power over others (see Maner, 2017). Thus, rather than being vilified for their violent reactions, men are viewed preferentially for having come to the defense of their honor, and men gain a sort of social rank for reasserting their masculinity (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994, 1997; O'Dea et al., 2017).

But are men simply rewarded for exhibitions of violence or is violence only encouraged to defend against threats to one's masculinity? Interestingly, there is speculation in cultures of honor that men are not expected to behave violently in general, but only in response to threat. Instead, aside from provocation and threats to masculine honor, men are expected to treat others with respect and dignity (e.g., norms of politeness; see Cohen, Vandello, Puente, & Rantilla, 1999). That said, men continue to demonstrate their masculinity in ways that preemptively deter threats and assert masculinity such as their posture, their musculature, their facial expressions, and their apparel (Saucier et al., in press). It is in this way men gain a sense of prestige (Maner, 2017), a reputation as someone not to be messed with. As discussed, previous research has examined these effects by comparing the motivations behind murders in both the Northern and Southern United States with more *honor-based* killings happening in the South, explaining the difference in overall rate of violence in the American South. However, no previous research to our knowledge has examined perceptions of men who exhibit violence instrumentally in response to threat versus exhibiting violence for the sake of being violent (i.e., when there is no threat).

2. Study 1

In Study 1, we examined whether masculine honor beliefs moderated perceptions of a protagonist who confronted versus did not confront an antagonist who, following bumping into the protagonist's shoulder, either insulted or apologized to the protagonist. Building on previous research, we hypothesized a three-way interaction between masculine honor beliefs, insult, and confrontation. Specifically, consistent with O'Dea et al. (2017), we predicted masculine honor beliefs would enhance participants' masculine perceptions of a protagonist who confronted an antagonist who insulted the protagonist, but diminish participants' masculine perceptions of a protagonist who did not confront an antagonist who insulted the protagonist. Further, extending the findings of O'Dea et al. (2017), we predicted masculine honor beliefs would be associated with diminished masculine perceptions of a protagonist who confronted an antagonist who did not insult the protagonist, but would have no impact on perceptions of a protagonist who did not confront an antagonist who did not insult the protagonist. These results provide a specific test of the long-standing assumption in research on masculine honor that men are not simply rewarded for being violent, but are rewarded for being violent in response to insult or threat as a function of masculine honor.

2.1. Study 1 method

2.1.1. Participants

Two hundred eighty participants participated in the current study. Participants were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical TURK software and paid 5 cents for their participation. One participant did not complete any of the measures and 23 additional participants did not complete the MHBS (Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale) and were removed from data analysis. Of the remaining 256 participants, 174 self-identified as female and the remaining 81 participants self-identified as male. We did not have precedent for an estimated effect size so we deferred to

from Wilson VanVoorhis and Morgan (2007) suggesting at least 50 participants per condition. One participant did not complete the demographic items but was retained for other analyses. The majority of participants identified as White (199). Of the remaining participants, 20 identified as Black, 10 identified as Hispanic, 17 identified as Asian, 4 identified as Native American, and 5 identified as “other”. The average age of participants was 36.72 ($SD = 12.16$).

2.1.2. Vignettes

Study 1 used a vignette depicting the scenario of a male protagonist, Danny, walking down a busy sidewalk. Another man (i.e., antagonist) who was passing by bumped into Danny. The vignette was then manipulated such that it depicted the antagonist as either being apologetic (saying “my bad”) or insulting to Danny (saying “fucking pussy”; an insult threatening one’s masculinity; see Saucier, Strain, et al., 2015; Saucier, Till, et al., 2015; Saucier et al., submitted). Danny then either walked away (i.e., not confronting) or chose to hit the antagonist (i.e., confronting). The complete vignette as was shown in the apologetic/did not confront condition is shown below (the bracketed portions denote the alternative conditions).

Danny is walking down the sidewalk of a busy street when a man bumps into him. The stranger turns to Danny and says “my bad” [and mutters “fucking pussy”]. Danny ignores him and continues walking down the sidewalk [Danny reacts by punching the man in the face].

2.1.3. Measures

The following measures were completed online using Qualtrics online software. Participants responded to each item using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) Likert scale. For each measure a composite score was generated by averaging the participants’ responses to the items. The calculated composite score indicates the level of the construct, with higher scores indicating a higher level of the construct being measured. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations between each of our variables are presented in Table 1.

2.1.3.1. Masculine honor beliefs. In order to measure participants’ endorsement of masculine honor beliefs we used the 35-item Masculine Honor Belief Scale (MHBS; Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, O’Dea, et al., 2016). The MHBS includes items such as: *You would want your son to stand up to bullies*, and *A man should stand up for a female who is in his family or is a close friend*.

2.1.3.2. Perceptions as Masculine and Honorable. To measure participants’ perceptions of the protagonist as adhering to the role of a man as defined in cultures of honor (e.g., Cohen & Nisbett, 1994) we used two previous measures assessing participants’ perceptions of the protagonist as manly and nonmanly (O’Dea et al., 2017). We also created two additional measures (more details given below) to measure the extent to which participants perceived the protagonist in the vignette as honorable and appropriate. We combined these measures into one overarching measure ($\alpha = 0.98$) we labeled as Perceptions as

Masculine and Honorable (PMH). The nonmanly perceptions measure was reverse-scored prior to inclusion in the PMH measure. It is important to note, while we will not be discussing the results of the individual measures in text in the interest of simplicity, tables displaying these findings are available upon request from the corresponding author.

2.1.3.3. Extent to which the protagonist’s actions were appropriate. We also examined the level to which participants perceived the protagonist’s response as being appropriate using 5 items. An example item is, *Danny did the right thing*.

2.1.3.4. Extent to which the protagonist’s actions were honorable. We examined the level to which participants perceived the protagonist’s response as being honorable using 5 items. An example item is, *What Danny did was the honorable thing to do*.

2.1.4. Procedure

Participants were recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk software. After providing informed consent, participants read a randomly assigned vignette depicting one of the four possible scenarios described above. Participants then completed the measures of manly perceptions of the protagonist, non-manly perceptions of the protagonist, the extent to which the protagonist’s actions were appropriate and honorable, and the MHBS. Lastly, participants completed a demographics survey (e.g., age, race, sex). After completion of the measures, participants were debriefed, given small monetary compensation, and thanked for their participation.

2.2. Study 1 results and discussion

We hypothesized masculine honor beliefs would interact with both of our manipulated variables (whether the antagonist apologized versus insulted the protagonist in our vignette and whether the protagonist then confronted versus did not confront the antagonist) in predicting participants’ perceptions of the protagonist in the vignette as manly, nonmanly, honorable, and appropriate. We examined the effects of masculine honor beliefs, antagonist’s response (coded as 0 = apologized, 1 = insulted), confrontation (coded as 0 = confront, 1 = did not confront), and their interactions predicting participants’ PMH.

As can be seen in Table 2, there were several main effects and interactions. However, more important to the hypotheses of the current manuscript is the predicted three-way interaction between MHBS, the antagonist’s response, and the protagonist confronting the antagonist or not. Consistent with our hypotheses, this three-way interaction was significant (see Fig. 1). Specifically, there was no effect of MHBS predicting PMH when the antagonist apologized and the protagonist confronted him. However, higher levels of MHBS were associated with greater perceptions of PMH when the protagonist confronted the antagonist who insulted him and when the protagonist did not confront the antagonist who apologized to him. Further, higher levels of MHBS were associated with lower perceptions of the PMH when the protagonist did not confront the antagonist who insulted him. These results

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, correlations between, and reliabilities for each of the measures in Study 1.

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. MHBS	5.28	1.29	(0.94)					
2. Manly	4.44	2.52	0.06	(0.97)				
3. Nonmanly	3.99	2.56	0.12	−0.66***	(0.91)			
4. Honorable	4.22	3.93	0.01	0.86***	−0.61***	(0.97)		
5. Appropriate	4.62	3.17	−0.00	0.84***	−0.62***	0.94***	(0.97)	
6. PMH	4.64	2.55	0.01	0.96***	−0.74***	0.95***	0.95***	(0.98)

Note. Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach Alpha levels.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 2
Regression model predicting participants' Perceptions as Masculine and Honorable of the protagonist in Study 1.

Predictor	β	SE	p	95% CI lower, upper
MHBS	0.09	0.03	.446	0.02, 0.16
Other man's response	0.35	0.03	< .001	0.29, 0.42
Confrontation	0.73	0.03	.009	0.67, 0.80
MHBS \times Other man's response	-0.02	0.03	.529	-0.09, 0.05
MHBS \times Confrontation	-0.09	0.03	.007	-0.16, -0.03
Other man's response \times Confrontation	0.05	0.03	.142	-0.02, 0.12
MHBS \times Other man's response \times Confrontation	-0.17	0.03	< .001	-0.23, -0.10
Model $R^2 = 0.72$, $F(7, 248) = 90.53$, $p < .001$				
Interaction $R^2 = 0.03$, $F(1, 248) = 23.33$, $p < .001$				

MHBS Simple slopes \times Other man's response \times Confrontation		β	SE	p	95% CI lower, upper
Apologizes	Confront	0.04	0.07	.639	-0.11, 0.18
	Did not confront	0.19	0.07	.006	0.05, 0.32
Insults	Confront	0.33	0.07	< .001	0.19, 0.47
	Did not confront	-0.18	0.06	.003	-0.30, -0.06

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale; Other man's response was entered as 0 = apologizes, 1 = insults; Confrontation was entered as 0 = confront, 1 = did not confront. All variables were standardized prior to entry in the process macro, thus producing standardized regression coefficients.

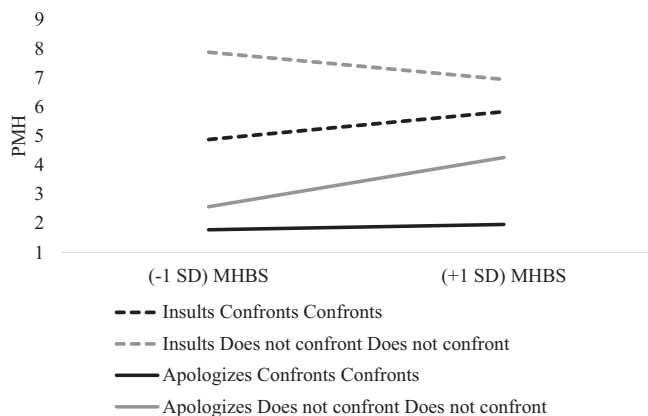


Fig. 1. The 3-way interaction predicting participants' Perceptions as Masculine and Honorable of the protagonist in Study 1.

are consistent with descriptions of honor suggesting masculine honor is not associated with the belief that men are expected to be violent generally (e.g., Cohen, 1998). This effect is evidenced by the lack of effect of masculine honor on participants' perceptions of PMH when the protagonist confronted the man who apologized to him. Instead, men are expected to respond violently only when their masculinity is threatened such as when their masculinity is insulted. Our results were consistent with this theoretical perspective such that higher levels of MHBS were associated with enhanced PMH when the protagonist confronted the man who insulted him and did not confront the man who apologized to him. This expectation is further evidenced by diminished PMH when the protagonist did not confront the other man who insulted him.

3. Study 2

In Study 2, we replicated and extended the results of Study 1 by examining whether masculine honor beliefs moderate individuals' perceptions of a protagonist who confronted versus did not confront an antagonist who insulted versus apologized to the protagonist's significant other. As noted in the introduction, masculine honor ideologies are associated with the belief that men should defend themselves, their significant others, their families, and their property from threats or, in this case, insults (e.g., Cohen & Nisbett, 1994, 1997; O'Dea et al., 2017; Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016; Saucier, Till, et al., 2015). Similar to Study 1, we used a manipulated vignette except that

instead of the antagonist bumping the shoulder of the protagonist, the antagonist bumped the shoulder of his significant other. The antagonist then either said “my bad” or referred to her as a “fucking bitch”. The protagonist then either confronted the man or walked away. Similar to Study 1, we predicted masculine honor beliefs would enhance positive perceptions of the protagonist who confronted the antagonist for the insult and when the protagonist did not confront the antagonist who apologized. We predicted masculine honor beliefs would not have an effect when the antagonist apologized. Further, we predicted masculine honor beliefs would diminish PMH perceptions when the antagonist insulted the protagonist and the protagonist did not confront the antagonist.

3.1. Study 2 method

3.1.1. Participants

Two hundred sixty-seven participants signed up for the current study. Participants were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical TURK software and paid 5 cents for their participation. One participant chose not to complete any of the measures while twenty-one participants did not complete the MHBS or any measures after the MHBS including demographics. These participants were excluded from analyses. One participant did not complete the demographics items but was retained for analysis. Of the remaining 244 participants, 166 self-identified as female, 77 self-identified as male and one participant self-identified as “other”. This sample size exceeded the necessary sample size to achieve 0.80 power based on the effect sizes found in Study 1 (0.31 residual variance with 0.03 additional variance explained by the three-way interaction). The majority of participants identified as White (190). Of the remaining participants, 21 identified as Black, 12 identified as Hispanic, 11 identified as Asian, three identified as Native American, three identified as Pacific Islander, and four identified as “other”. The average age of participants was 36.45 ($SD = 12.57$).

3.1.2. Vignettes

Study 2 used a vignette similar Study 1, again depicting a scenario of a male protagonist, Danny, walking down a busy sidewalk. Study 2 differs in that Danny was walking alongside his girlfriend. The girlfriend was then bumped into by an antagonist who was passing by. After the contact the vignette was manipulated such that it described the antagonist as either apologizing (“my bad”) or insulting her (“fucking bitch”). In response to the statement, the protagonist either did not confront the antagonist or confronted the antagonist by punching him in the face.

Table 3

Means, standard deviations, correlations between, and reliabilities for each of the measures in Study 2.

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. MHBS	5.38	1.40	(0.95)					
2. Manly	4.93	2.21	−0.01	(0.95)				
3. Nonmanly	3.84	2.48	0.18**	−0.68***	(0.88)			
4. Honorable	4.59	2.62	0.07	0.82***	−0.59***	(0.96)		
5. Appropriate	5.06	3.00	0.01	0.76***	−0.57***	0.87***	(0.97)	
6. PMH	5.05	2.27	−0.01	0.94***	−0.74***	0.93***	0.91***	(0.98)

Note. Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach Alpha levels.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

3.1.3. Measures

Participants completed the measures using Qualtrics online survey software. As in Study 1, participants responded to their perception of Danny's behavior as manly, non-manly, honorable, and appropriate. Participants also completed the Masculine Honor Belief Scale (Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016). Again, all items were scored on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) Likert scale. The composite scores of each measure were again calculated by averaging the responses to each item, with higher composite scores indicating higher levels of the particular construct being measured. For the sake of simplicity in reporting the results, we combined the measures into an overall composite score we labeled as Perceptions as Masculine and Honorable (PMH). As in Study 1, the nonmanly perceptions measure was reverse-scored prior to inclusion in the PMH measure and results of the individual measures are available upon request from the corresponding author. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations between each of our variables and the combined PMH measure are presented in Table 3.

3.1.4. Procedure

Participants were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk software. After providing informed consent, participants read a vignette depicting one of the four possible scenarios described above. Participants then completed the measures of manly perceptions of the protagonist, nonmanly perceptions of the protagonist, the extent to which the protagonist's actions were appropriate, the extent to which the protagonist's actions were honorable, and the Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale. Lastly, participants completed a demographics survey (e.g., age, race, sex). After completing the measures, participants were debriefed, given small monetary compensation, and thanked for their participation.

3.2. Study 2 results and discussion

We hypothesized masculine honor beliefs would interact with both of our manipulated variables (whether an antagonist apologized to versus insulted the protagonist's significant other in our vignette, and whether the protagonist then confronted or did not confront the antagonist) in predicting participants' perceptions of the protagonist in the vignette as manly, nonmanly, honorable, and appropriate. To test these hypotheses, MHBS scores, the antagonist's response (coded as 0 = apologized, 1 = insulted), and confrontation (coded as 0 = confront, 1 = did not confront), and their interactions were entered into regression models predicting participants' PMH. These results are presented in Table 4. There were again multiple main effects and 2-way interactions predicting participants' PMH. However, the three-way interaction between these variables is the more important test for the hypotheses of the current study (see Fig. 2). The three-way interaction was significant. Specifically, when the antagonist apologized to the protagonist's girlfriend, MHBS did not impact PMH perceptions of the protagonist. However, consistent with Study 1, when the antagonist insulted the protagonist's girlfriend and the protagonist confronted the antagonist, higher levels of MHBS were associated with greater PMH of

the protagonist. Further, when the antagonist insulted the protagonist and the protagonist did not confront the antagonist, higher levels of MHBS were associated with lower PMH of the protagonist.

Previous studies (e.g., O'Dea et al., 2017) have shown higher levels of masculine honor beliefs are associated with more positive perceptions of men who confront insults to their masculinity and less positive perceptions of men who do not confront insults to their masculinity. In Studies 1 and 2, we extended these findings by examining whether men are simply socially rewarded for violence regardless of why they are fighting. Consistent with previous theoretical discussion on masculine honor (e.g., Cohen, 1998), masculine honor ideology does not necessarily endorse the perception that men should behave violently in all situations. Instead, men are expected to respond aggressively to insults or threats directed at themselves, their significant others, their families, or their property.

4. Study 3

We extended these findings in Study 3 by examining whether, as a function of masculine honor beliefs, the physical size of the antagonist (bigger versus smaller than the protagonist) and the actual outcome of the fight (protagonist wins versus loses) affect the social perceptions men earn for engaging in honor-based instrumental violence (i.e., defending a woman from harm). We conducted a 2 (size of the opponent: bigger, smaller) \times 2 (outcome of the fight: protagonist wins, protagonist loses) between-groups design to examine this research question. Due to masculine honor being associated with men's desires to make themselves *hard targets* (see Saucier, O'Dea, et al., in press), we hypothesized masculine honor beliefs would interact with both size of the opponent and outcome of the fight. Specifically, we predicted higher levels of masculine honor beliefs would be associated with higher levels of PMH of a protagonist who fought against a larger antagonist than a smaller antagonist because he is better showcasing his formidability. Further, we predicted this effect would be stronger when the protagonist won the fight versus lost the fight because he has now established his reputation as someone *not to be messed with*.

4.1. Study 3 method

4.1.1. Participants

Sample size was again based on recommendations from Wilson VanVoorhis and Morgan (2007) suggesting at least 50 participants per condition because we did not have previous theoretical basis for the expected effect size. Two hundred eighty-one participants signed up for the current study. Participants were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical TURK software and paid 5 cents for their participation. Two participants did not complete any of the measures and twenty-seven additional participants did not complete the MHBS. These participants were excluded from data analysis. Of the remaining 252 participants, 163 self-identified as female, 88 participants self-identified as male, and one participant self-identified as "other". The majority of participants identified as White (174). Of the remaining participants, 29 identified

Table 4
Regression model predicting participants' Perceptions as Masculine and Honorable of the protagonist in Study 2.

Predictor	β	SE	p	95% CI lower, upper
MHBS	-0.03	0.05	.519	-0.12, 0.06
Other man's response	0.10	0.04	.026	0.01, 0.19
Confrontation	0.49	0.04	< .001	0.40, 0.58
MHBS × Other man's response	-0.10	0.05	.031	-0.19, -0.01
MHBS × Confrontation	-0.24	0.05	< .001	-0.33, -0.15
Other man's response × Confrontation	-0.42	0.05	< .001	-0.50, -0.32
MHBS × Other man's response × Confrontation	-0.17	0.05	< .001	-0.26, -0.08
Model $R^2 = 0.53$, $F(7, 237) = 37.75$, $p < .001$				
Interaction $R^2 = 0.03$, $F(1, 237) = 14.51$, $p < .001$				

MHBS Simple slopes × Other man's response × Confrontation		β	SE	p	95% CI lower, upper
Apologizes	Confront	0.14	0.09	.147	-0.05, 0.32
	Did not confront	0.01	0.08	.938	-0.16, 0.17
Insults	Confront	0.29	0.10	.003	0.10, 0.48
	Did not confront	-0.52	0.09	< .001	-0.69, -0.35

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale; Other man's response was entered as 0 = apologizes, 1 = insults; Confrontation was entered as 0 = confront, 1 = did not confront. All variables were standardized prior to entry in the process macro, thus producing standardized regression coefficients.

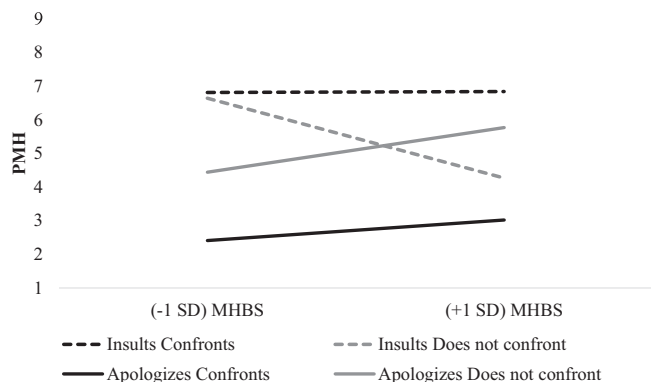


Fig. 2. The 3-way interaction predicting participants' Perceptions as Masculine and Honorable of the protagonist in Study 2.

as Black, 14 identified as Hispanic, 21 identified as Asian, 5 identified as Native American, 1 participant identified as Pacific Islander, and 8 identified as “other”. The average age of participants was 35.08 ($SD = 11.79$).

4.1.2. Vignettes

Study 3 used manipulated vignettes to depict one of four scenarios randomly assigned to participants. The vignettes describe a scene in which a male protagonist, Sean, physically confronted an antagonist who was physically assaulting a woman. We manipulated whether the antagonist was bigger or smaller than the protagonist and whether the protagonist won or lost the fight to determine whether physical size of an opponent and outcome of the fight would impact perceptions of a

man who defends a woman from harm as a function of masculine honor beliefs. The complete vignette, as was shown in the smaller antagonist, protagonist wins the fight condition, is shown below (the bracketed portions denote the alternative conditions).

As Sean walks to his car at night, he hears a man yelling at a woman. Turning, he sees the man slap the woman. Sean yells “Stop” and runs toward the attacker. The man towers over Sean [Sean towers over the man], clearly much bigger than he is. A fight ensues. Sean wins the fight by beating up the attacker, who then runs away [Sean loses the fight by being beaten up the attacker. Sean then runs away].

4.1.3. Measures

Participants completed the measures using Qualtrics online survey software. As in Studies 1 and 2, participants reported their perceptions of the protagonist's behavior as manly, non-manly, honorable, and appropriate. Participants also completed the Masculine Honor Belief Scale (Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016). Again, all items were scored on 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree) Likert scales. The composite scores of each measure were again calculated by averaging the responses to each item, with higher composite scores indicating higher levels of the particular construct being measured. Again, for simplicity in reporting the effects, we combined each of these measures into one composite variable we have labeled as Perceptions as Masculine and Honorable (PMH). Nonmanly perceptions were reverse-scored prior to inclusion in the combined variable. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations between each of our variables are presented in Table 5.

4.1.4. Procedure

Again using Amazon's Mechanical Turk software, participants were

Table 5
Means, standard deviations, correlations between, and reliabilities for each of the measures in Study 3.

Measure	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. MHBS	5.63	1.28	(0.94)					
2. Manly	6.72	1.47	0.26**	(0.92)				
3. Nonmanly	2.36	2.36	0.12	-0.54***	(0.90)			
4. Honorable	7.13	7.13	0.24**	0.69***	-0.49***	(0.92)		
5. Appropriate	6.68	6.68	0.19**	0.66***	-0.48***	0.80***	(0.91)	
6. PMH	6.92	6.92	0.21**	0.91***	-0.67***	0.88***	0.87***	(0.96)

Note. Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach Alpha levels.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 6

Study 3 regression models predicting perceptions of the protagonist as masculine and honorable.

Variable	β	t	p
MHBS	0.17	2.80	.005
Size	−0.04	−0.59	.553
Outcome	−0.21	−3.47	.001
MHBS * Size	0.01	0.19	.851
MHBS * Outcome	−0.19	−3.21	.002
Size * Outcome	0.01	0.24	.808
MHBS * Size * Outcome	−0.07	−1.11	.267

Note. All variables were standardized prior to entry in the process macro, thus producing standardized regression coefficients. Size was coded as 0 = bigger, 1 = smaller. Outcome was coded as 0 = wins, 1 = losses.

recruited for Study 3. After providing informed consent, participants read one of the four possible scenarios described in the vignette shown above. After reading the randomly assigned vignette, participants completed the MHBS and were asked to respond to items measuring their perceptions of the protagonist as manly and non-manly, and the extent to which they perceived the protagonist's actions to be honorable and appropriate. Lastly, participants completed a demographic survey (e.g., age, race, sex). Upon completion participants were thanked, debriefed, and given monetary compensation.

4.2. Study 3 results and discussion

We hypothesized masculine honor beliefs would interact with both size of the opponent (bigger, smaller) and the outcome of the fight (protagonist wins, loses) in predicting participants' perceptions of the protagonist, who stepped in to help a woman who was being assaulted, as masculine and honorable. We tested this hypothesis by entering size, outcome, MHBS, and their interactions were entered into a regression model predicting participants' PMH.

Full statistical reporting of the individual main effects is presented in Table 6. There was a significant unique effect of MHBS such that higher scores on the MHBS were associated with greater PMH of the protagonist. Therefore, consistent with previous research, men were perceived more positively for defending a woman as a function of masculine honor. Further, there was a significant unique effect of outcome such that the protagonist who won the fight was rated as higher PMH than the protagonist who lost the fight. There was no main effect of size of the opponent. The only 2-way interaction shown to be significant was the MHBS \times Outcome interaction. We probed this interaction by examining the simple slopes of MHBS when the perpetrator won and lost the fight. Consistent with our hypotheses, these analyses revealed a significant effect of MHBS when the perpetrator won the fight ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 3.89$, $p < .001$); such that higher levels of MHBS were associated with greater PMH. There was no significant effect of MHBS when the protagonist lost the fight ($\beta = 0.01$, $t = 0.07$, $p = .946$). The 3-way interaction was not significant.

Consistent with our hypotheses, masculine honor beliefs interacted with the outcome of the fight in predicting participants' PMH. Interestingly, the size of the opponent did not interact with masculine honor beliefs or the outcome of the fight in predicting participants' PMH. Furthermore, in examining the two-way interaction, men were perceived more positively when they won a fight in defense of a woman as a function of masculine honor. However, we did not find men's reputations were diminished when they lost the fight in an attempt to defend the woman. This may be due to masculine honor beliefs being associated with the expectation men engage (and their social reputations will be rewarded for) demonstrating their masculinity by engaging in physical defense of a woman. Therefore, men may not be perceived negatively as a function of masculine honor beliefs for fighting to defend a woman, even when they lose; but men are rewarded with

increased social perceptions as a function of perceivers' masculine honor beliefs when they engage in violence to defend a woman from harm, especially if they defeat the antagonist.

5. Study 4

In Study 4, we replicated the findings of Study 3 by examining whether men, as a function of masculine honor beliefs, are socially rewarded with more positive social perceptions for winning a fight in defense of a woman. Further, we extended these findings by examining whether a man's reputation is further enhanced when he achieves his objective of defending the woman from harm. Similar to Study 3, we used a vignette in which a protagonist either won or lost a fight in defense of a woman. Further, we manipulated whether the protagonist was able to protect the woman from being harmed. The design of Study 4 was a 2 (harm to the woman: harm, no harm) \times 2 (outcome of the fight: protagonist wins, loses) between-groups design. We predicted masculine honor beliefs would interact with both the outcome of the fight and the harm to the woman such that higher levels of masculine honor beliefs would be associated with higher PMH when the man won the fight, and this effect would be exacerbated when the protagonist saved the woman from harm. That said, we predicted no harm coming to the woman would also positively impact PMH of the protagonist who lost the fight because he was successful in defending the woman. However, we predicted if the protagonist lost the fight and did not save the woman from harm, higher levels of masculine honor beliefs would be associated with lower PMH due to the protagonist not being able to save the woman from harm or establish himself as someone *not to be messed with*.

5.1. Study 4 method

5.1.1. Participants

Sample size was again based on recommendations from Wilson VanVoorhis and Morgan (2007) suggesting at least 50 participants per condition. Two hundred sixty-seven participants signed up for the current study. Participants were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical TURK software and paid 5 cents for their participation. Nineteen participants did not complete the MHBS or any measures after the MHBS including demographics. These participants were excluded from analyses. Of the remaining two hundred forty-eight participants, 151 self-identified as female and the remaining 95 participants self-identified as male. The majority of participants identified as White (180). Of the remaining participants, 26 identified as Black, 18 identified as Hispanic, 14 identified as Asian, 8 identified as Native American, and 2 identified as "other". The average age of participants was 35.42 ($SD = 11.67$).

5.1.2. Vignettes

The vignettes used in Study 4 depicted a scene in which the protagonist, Sean, came to the aid of a woman who was being physically assaulted by an antagonist by attacking the antagonist. To examine whether harm to the woman would affect perceptions of the protagonist, the vignette was manipulated such that the protagonist either succeeded or failed in preventing the woman from being harmed. We also manipulated whether the protagonist won or lost the fight. The complete vignette is shown below (the bracketed portions denote the alternative condition).

As Sean walks to his car at night, he hears a man yelling at a woman. Turning, he sees the man slap the woman. Sean yells "Stop" and runs toward the attacker. A fight ensues. Sean wins the fight by beating up the attacker [Sean loses the fight and is beaten up by the attacker], who then runs away. Sean then turns to the woman and sees that she is left shaken, but unhurt [and hurt]. Sean realizes she is uninjured and does not need medical attention [Sean realizes she is

Table 7
Means, standard deviations, correlations between, and reliabilities for each of the measures in Study 4.

Measure	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. MHBS	5.71	1.39	(0.95)					
2. Manly	7.29	1.29	0.32**	(0.92)				
3. Nonmanly	2.11	1.73	0.09	−0.45***	(0.92)			
4. Honorable	7.70	1.53	0.23***	0.66***	−0.54***	(0.89)		
5. Appropriate	7.34	1.72	0.19**	0.63***	−0.52***	0.82***	(0.90)	
6. PMH	7.47	1.27	0.24***	0.88***	−0.67***	0.89***	0.88***	(0.95)

Note. Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach Alpha levels.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

injured and needs medical attention].

5.1.3. Measures

As with the previous three studies we measured participants' perceptions of the protagonist's actions as manly, non-manly, honorable, and appropriate, and their perceptions of the extent to which confronting the antagonist physically was appropriate. Each item was again scored on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) Likert scale. Participants again completed the Masculine Honor Belief Scale. As in the previous studies, composite scores for each measure were calculated by averaging responses to each item. Higher composite scores indicated higher levels of the particular construct being measured. These measures were also combined into one overarching measure assessing participants' Perceptions Masculine and Honorable (PMH) but individual measure results are available upon request from the corresponding author. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations between each of our variables are presented in Table 7.

5.1.4. Procedure

Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk software. Participants provided informed consent, and then read one of the four possible vignettes described above. Participants then completed items measuring their perceptions of the protagonist as manly and non-manly, and their perceptions of the extent to which the protagonist's actions were appropriate and honorable. Participants then completed the MHBS, followed by a demographics survey (e.g., age, race, sex). Participants were then debriefed, given small monetary compensation, and thanked for their time.

5.2. Study 4 results and discussion

Building on Study 3, we predicted the outcome of the fight (protagonist wins, loses) and whether the protagonist succeeds in protecting the woman from harm or not would interact with participants' MHBS scores in predicting participants' PMH of the protagonist. We tested this hypothesis using a regression model in which we entered MHBS, harm, outcome, and their interactions. These results are presented in Table 8.

As shown in Table 8, the only individual predictor that was uniquely significant was MHBS, such that higher levels of MHBS were associated with greater PMH of the protagonist. Consistent with our hypotheses and Study 3, the interaction between MHBS and outcome was significant (it should be noted this interaction was not significant for the nonmanly [$\beta = 0.10, p = .103$] and honorable [$\beta = -0.11, p = .098$] criterion measures prior to combination, although the effects trended in the hypothesized directions). We probed this interaction by examining the simple slopes of MHBS when the protagonist won and lost the fight. Consistent with Study 3, higher levels of MHBS were associated with significantly higher PMH when the protagonist won the fight ($\beta = 0.32, t = 3.61, p < .001$). There was no significant effect of MHBS when the protagonist lost the fight ($\beta = 0.07, t = 0.81, p = .417$). Thus, consistent with previous research theorizing that men should make

Table 8
Study 4 regression models predicting perceptions of the protagonist as masculine and honorable.

Variable	β	t	p
MHBS	0.24	3.92	< .001
Harm	0.05	0.82	.414
Outcome	−0.05	−0.75	.455
MHBS * Harm	−0.05	−0.79	.432
MHBS * Outcome	−0.14	−2.23	.027
Harm * Outcome	−0.00	−0.03	.978
MHBS * Harm * Outcome	−0.09	−1.46	.145

Note. All variables were standardized prior to entry in the process macro, thus producing standardized regression coefficients. Harm was coded as 0 = no harm, 1 = harm. Outcome was coded as 0 = wins, 1 = loses.

themselves *hard targets*, higher levels of MHBS were associated with more positive perceptions of men who win a fight to defend a woman from harm. Further, consistent with Study 3, men's social reputations were not diminished when they lost the fight, indicating MHBS is associated with the belief that men should defend women from harm. The 3-way interaction was not significant.

Taken together, the results of Studies 3 and 4 replicate the results of Studies 1 and 2 by showing men are expected to respond aggressively to provocation. Extending the results of Studies 1 and 2, Studies 3 and 4 indicate that perceptions of men who respond aggressively to provocation are further rewarded with increased positive perceptions when they win the fight. Interestingly, our additional manipulations of situational factors such as the size of the opponent in the fight and whether the protagonist actually saved the woman from harm did not interact with masculine honor beliefs in predicting perceptions of the protagonist. These findings may indicate, while men are expected to defend women from harm, the goal may not be as rooted in the protection of others as once thought. Instead, while masculine honor beliefs are associated with the protection of others from harm which remains the expected norm, the actual goal and the evaluation of men by others may hinge more on the outcome of the aggression rather than achievement of protection.

6. General discussion

In Studies 1 and 2, we examined whether masculine honor beliefs moderated perceptions of a male protagonist who confronted versus did not confront a male antagonist who either insulted versus did not insult him (Study 1) or his significant other (Study 2). Previous research has shown masculine honor beliefs are associated with more positive perceptions of a male protagonist who confronted (and less positive perceptions of a male protagonist who did not confront) a male antagonist who insulted the protagonist's masculinity (O'Dea et al., 2017). Studies 1 and 2 replicated these findings by showing that greater masculine honor beliefs were associated with greater perceptions of the protagonist as manly and honorable when the protagonist confronted the man who insulted him (Study 1) or his significant other (Study 2), and with

diminished perceptions of the protagonist as manly and honorable when the protagonist did not confront the other man who insulted him. It may be that men are socially rewarded for violence generally as a function of masculine honor beliefs. Or men may only be socially rewarded when they engage in instrumental violence to protect and preserve their masculinity. The latter is more consistent with theory on masculine honor. This theoretical perspective has predominantly been limited to tests at the regional level by comparing the Northern United States to the Southern United States (e.g., Cohen, 1998; Cohen & Nisbett, 1994), rather than in participants' ideological beliefs (cf., Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016). We extended these findings by showing masculine honor beliefs were only associated with perceptions of the protagonist as manly and honorable when the protagonist confronted the man who insulted him. Thus, men are expected to defend themselves, but only following a threat, insult, or other form of provocation against one's masculinity.

We further extended previous research by examining whether masculine honor beliefs moderated perceptions of a man who intervened in an assault defending a woman from harm. Using a vignette, we varied situational factors of the fight including the size of the opponent the man was fighting (as bigger or smaller, Study 3), whether the man achieved his goal of protecting the woman from harm (Study 4), and in each of these studies we manipulated whether the man won or lost the fight. These results were generally shown to be consistent with our hypothesis that masculine honor beliefs would enhance positive perceptions of a man who won a fight and diminish perceptions of a man who lost the fight. However, we also predicted masculine honor beliefs would interact with both size of the opponent (Study 3) and whether the man saved the woman from harm (Study 4). Instead, masculine honor beliefs, surprisingly, did not interact with either size of the opponent or whether the protagonist saved the woman from harm. We had hypothesized that defeating a larger opponent and saving a woman from harm would provide greater opportunities to build a man's reputation as honorable. Future research should examine reasons for why these variables do not impact perceptions of men who defend others from harm. It could be men are simply expected to respond violently to threats and other forms of provocation against their masculinity regardless of the situation and their reputations profit from a successful demonstration of formidability in winning a fight.

6.1. Limitations

One limitation of the current studies is men were being evaluated in hypothetical vignettes. Participants' perceptions of the man could be affected if they were to witness this defense of one's honor in real life situations. In real life situations, participants would be able to perceive the intent of the antagonist to insult the protagonist. Alternatively, it could be, even though the insults used in the current study are generally indicative of animosity, there is potential for derogative terms and other potentially offensive remarks to be intended as positive when the perpetrator and target of the term are friends and/or have rapport (see O'Dea et al., 2015; O'Dea & Saucier, 2017; O'Dea & Saucier, submitted; Saucier, Strain, Miller, O'Dea, & Till, 2018). Thus, the results may be impacted by participants' perceptions of the intent of the perpetrator if this were to occur in real life.

Another important limitation to the current study is that these findings are dependent on one specific form of honor, masculine honor, which has roots in specific regions of the world. Factors that are perceived as being honorable differ from one region to another, from one group of individuals to another, or even from one person to another. That said this specific form of honor is prevalent in the United States as well as other areas around the world (e.g., Spain; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002) and individuals move between countries and cultures frequently. Thus, we contend that masculine honor is a widespread phenomenon that not only differs regionally, but also within regions at the individual level (e.g., Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012; Rodriguez

Mosquera et al., 2002; Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier, Miller, et al., in press; Saucier, O'Dea, et al., 2016; Vandello, Cohen, et al., 2009).

6.2. Implications

The current studies have important implications. Little research has been conducted examining how masculine honor beliefs are related to third party perceptions of men who engage in violence. These third party perceptions are important because masculine honor is a social variable in which men are rewarded by demonstrating their masculinity by responding aggressively to insults, threats, and other forms of provocation. Further, the expectations in cultures of honor are instilled by others (e.g., parents, community). We have shown that the masculine honor beliefs - an individual difference variable highlighting individuals' beliefs that men should protect their family, property, and community by responding physically to insults, threats, and other forms of provocation - is important in predicting individuals' perceptions of men who engage in violence.

Further, our current studies are among the first to examine how masculine honor beliefs are related to third party perceptions of men who respond physically when there is no threat present. For decades, research on masculine honor has specified that men are not expected to behave violently in general (e.g., Cohen, 1998), with research on crime statistics showing differences between honor cultures and non-honor cultures only in situations in which men are responding to threat or provocation. However, little research has directly examined perceptions of men who respond physically when there is no threat or provocation present. We have demonstrated empirically that when there is no insult, threat, or other form of provocation present, men are not expected to respond with physical aggression.

7. Conclusion

We examined factors that affect perceptions of men as masculine and honorable. Specifically, as a function of masculine honor beliefs, we examined perceptions of a male protagonist who confronted versus failed to confront an male antagonist who insulted versus apologized to the protagonist after bumping into the protagonist or his significant other. Further, we examined how situational factors affect how a man who confronts a threat or other form of provocation is perceived. Our results showed that men are expected to confront insults, threats, and other forms of provocation directed at themselves and their significant other, but are not expected to behave violently in general. These results confirm archival analysis of violent crimes committed between the Northern and Southern United States, that masculine honor beliefs dictate that men should only use violence instrumentally as a response to insults, threats, and other forms of provocation. Men's reputations are further enhanced when they win, but are not diminished when they lose, the fight. Building on previous theory, the expectation that men try to defend against insults, threats, and other forms of provocation, and the enhanced reputation for winning the fight, function to make men *hard targets*; both preemptively deterring threats and other forms of provocation by functioning as a shield, but also to swiftly and decisively respond to threats and provocation as a sword.

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