

Restoring Honor by Slapping or Disowning the Daughter

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Personality and Social
Psychology Bulletin
1–14
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DOI: 10.1177/01461672221079106
journals.sagepub.com/home/pspb



Abstract

The psychological processes underlying honor violence against kin are poorly understood. We assumed that honor violence against daughters who violate a gendered norm is designed to uphold family honor and nurture positive links to the community. Four studies with Indian men supported this formulation. As expected, endorsement of honor violence (i.e., slapping or disowning the daughter) increased insofar as perceived community awareness of the violation increased. Moreover, endorsement of honor violence was especially common among those whose identities were closely aligned (“fused”) with their community. Finally, a desire to restore threatened family honor, rather than a motivation to prevent future dishonor, motivates honor violence against daughters; conversely, a desire to prevent future dishonor motivates constructive activities such as advising. Ironically, a benign, culturally universal desire to maintain positive ties to the community can encourage community members to endorse violence toward transgressive kin.

Keywords

honor-based violence, honor, reputation, identity fusion, India

Received June 21, 2021; revision accepted January 19, 2022

For centuries, people have defended their honor by threatening, or actually enacting, violence toward their adversaries. This much is unsurprising. More perplexing, however, are instances in which people work to maintain honor by turning on members of their own families (Wikan, 2009). This report focuses on such intrafamily instances of honor violence. We were specifically interested in whether a rarely studied group—Indian men—would react to their daughters’ violations of a gendered moral code by disowning or endorsing violence against her. Integrating ideas from the honor and group identity literatures, we examined the relation between publicness of the violation, strong alignment (identity fusion) with the community, and behaviors designed to restore the family’s honor. We first put our hypotheses in context through a discussion of past research on the nature of honor and honor violence.

Honor Matters

Honor is a form of “social currency” (Bourdieu, 1986) that increases insofar as individuals abide by their community’s codes and norms. Honor encompasses a person’s estimation of their own worth derived from abiding by an honor code and the acknowledgment of one’s worth in that domain by their community (Pitt-Rivers, 1965). People who are considered honorable generally enjoy their community’s respect and trust (Sommers, 2018). These perceptions, in turn, can

produce tangible benefits in business, social, and personal life. Although past researchers have used the honor construct to explain phenomena primarily in non-WEIRD cultures (Shier & Shor, 2015), they have used related constructs (e.g., moral reputation) to explain parallel phenomena in WEIRD cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2011). Given these parallels, in what follows, we borrow from literatures on both moral reputation and honor.

People in most cultures strive to cultivate the perception that they are honorable (Ellemers et al., 2008). Nevertheless, cultures vary in how much they emphasize honor and what constitutes honor (Cross et al., 2014; Mosquera, 2016). Mosquera identified four facets of honor—morality-based, masculine, feminine, and family honor. Each facet represents a different set of rules one needs to follow to remain honorable (Mosquera, 2016). Morality-based honor shows greatest similarity across cultures with the other facets displaying more cross-cultural variability. For example, studies show that “honor cultures,” such as Pakistan (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2013), Spain (Rodriguez Mosquera et al.,

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2002), Brazil (Vandello & Cohen, 2003), Turkey (Cross et al., 2013), and even the southern part of the United States (Cohen et al., 1996) place a higher emphasis on gender-based honor. In addition to maintaining personal honor, people may also try to maintain the shared honor of their groups such as family (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2013; van Osch et al., 2013) or country (Barnes et al., 2014), especially in more collectivistic cultures. To this end, they strive to keep fellow group members from violating relevant moral codes.

When Honor Is Threatened

Violations of the honor code threaten the honor of violators, and by extension, the honor of their group (Uhlmann et al., 2012; van der Toorn et al., 2015). Given the adverse consequences of losing honor, threats to honor can be enormously distressing. In fact, when their honor is threatened, people experience psychological and physiological stress (Cohen et al., 1996), and intense negative emotions (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002). Threats to family honor can likewise be stressful (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2013).

One way of coping with challenges to one's honor is to strategically enact behaviors designed to mitigate the threat. Support for this possibility comes from evidence that men across cultures respond to threats to masculine honor by attempting to reassert their honor through aggression and displays of fearlessness (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). In the same vein, when the behavior of a group member threatens the reputation of a group, the group may symbolically distance itself from the transgressor (Ashokkumar et al., 2019). Such signaling presumably demonstrates allegiance to the transgressed norm, thereby salvaging the group's reputation. Empirical support for this process has led to speculation that a desire to restore family honor may also explain violence against transgressive female family members. Studies have shown that in honor cultures, people positively evaluate individuals who act violently against a transgressive daughter or sister (Eisner & Ghuneim, 2013). Here, we directly examine whether a desire to restore family honor explains violent punishment or ostracization of a daughter who has violated an honor code.

Honor-Based Violence Against Women

The current research builds upon studies of honor-based violence toward wives or romantic partners (Vandello & Cohen, 2003) by exploring instances wherein men aggress against genetically related kin: their daughters. Although we are not the first in psychology to consider this possibility, the handful of studies that have examined violence against blood relatives have focused on *culture-level* variations rather than *individual-level* variations (Caffaro et al., 2014) or are limited to examining people's perceptions of such violence (Caffaro et al., 2016) rather than intention to actually enact

violent behaviors. As a result, much remains to be learned about the psychological processes that motivate fathers to enact honor violence against daughters who have violated gendered social norms.

At a general level, we assume that violence against transgressive daughters represents efforts to symbolically distance the family from the transgression, thereby restoring the family's reputation and honor (Araji, 2000). For example, a family member might slap the transgressor or engage in other forms of violence to signal that they do not condone the transgression. On rare occasions, they may ostracize or disown her (Araji, 2000; Wikan, 2009). By expressing unambiguous opposition to the transgression, family members distance the family from the transgression and proclaim the family's allegiance to the violated norm.

Past research suggests that several variables may moderate the impact of daughter's transgressions on subsequent violence toward them. First, in line with the thesis that violence serves as a response to reputational threat, violence should be endorsed more after public, as compared to private, transgressions. Consistent with this idea, Caffaro and colleagues tested whether people were especially likely to justify violence after public transgressions (Caffaro et al., 2014). Nevertheless, in their studies, publicness of transgressions was confounded with severity, which made it impossible to make strong inferences about the effect of publicness. Others have indirectly demonstrated the significance of publicness: Gunsoy et al. (2015) showed that Turkish women avoid publicizing behavior that is misaligned with the feminine honor code. In the same vein, Uskul et al. (2012) showed that when prompted to think about dishonor, Turkish participants generated situations involving an audience. Together, these findings provide suggestive evidence that public as compared to private transgressions might be particularly likely to foster perceptions of dishonor which will, in turn, encourage distancing actions such as violence and disowning.

Acting violently toward a transgressive daughter or disowning her are clear-cut signals of disapproval. Distancing the family from the transgression in these ways should help the family signal its allegiance to the violated norm, thereby restoring the family's honor. Weaker responses, such as advising the daughter, lack the symbolic power of slapping or disowning, so advising should be perceived to be less effective in restoring honor.

Finally, past work suggests that people whose identities are deeply aligned or "fused" with a group are especially committed to protecting the group's values (Fredman et al., 2017; Swann et al., 2014). This suggests that people who are strongly fused with their community should be particularly motivated to work to preserve their family's standing in the community. Therefore, fathers who are strongly fused with their community should be especially inclined to endorse distancing actions such as violence toward, or disowning of, errant daughters.

Overview of the Current Research

We focused on Indian men because this demographic has been overlooked despite being responsible for several egregious instances of honor violence. We recruited only married men because honor violence is typically perpetrated by male decision-makers on behalf of their families (Shier & Shor, 2015). In Studies 1 and 2 (but not 3 and 4), we mentioned these eligibility criteria in the study posting. All study materials were in English (one of India's official languages), and we used checks to identify and exclude participants with language difficulties.

In all studies, participants were asked to imagine a scenario in which their unmarried daughter violated a gendered social norm (e.g., having premarital sex). Participants were randomly assigned to read that their daughter's violation was publicly known to people in their community or not. After reading the vignette, participants rated their perceptions of dishonor to their family and their willingness to endorse various actions. We relied on a vignette-based measure of honor-related violence because we recognized that participants would be unlikely to divulge details about sensitive family matters. Moreover, MTurk participants are on average likely to be new parents with children who are too young to commit honor-related violations.

In all studies, we tested whether public violations were especially predictive of a willingness to endorse violence or disowning the daughter and also whether this effect was mediated by perceptions of dishonor to the family. In Study 1 only, we included three scenarios that varied in severity to assess how severe transgressions needed to be to elicit honor-related motivations. In Studies 3 and 4 only, we asked if participants who were strongly fused with their community were especially inclined to opt for distancing responses (slapping or disowning) to transgressive family members. In Study 4, we directly tested whether a motivation to restore the family's threatened honor underlies the endorsement of distancing actions. We also conducted exploratory analyses validating our conceptualization of slapping and disowning as distancing responses. Given that honor-related norms vary across caste groups (Mahalingam, 2007), we controlled for participants' caste in the models and report differences observed across castes in the Supplementary Online Materials (SOMs). Given the dearth of previous studies sampling Indians, we could not conduct a priori power analyses. Nevertheless, sample sizes in all studies were determined prior to analysis. We report all measures, exclusions, and descriptive statistics either in the article or the SOM. The data and materials are available at <https://osf.io/tvd3k/>.

Study I

Method

Participants. Using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), we recruited 295 Indian men who were married. We excluded 25 participants who failed an attention check (see SOM-III)

and one participant who reported facing technical issues, leaving a final sample of 269 participants ($M_{age} = 34.17$; $SD_{age} = 7.69$; 69.1% had a daughter; 98.1% college educated). A sensitivity analysis revealed that our sample had 80% power to detect a main effect of publicness of minimum $d = .34$.

Procedure. Participants first rated a statement about their attitude toward corporal punishment (i.e., "Sometimes, physical punishment is necessary to teach children good behavior"; $M = 4.67$; $SD = 1.87$) on a 7-point scale (1—strongly disagree, 7—strongly agree), which we treated as a control variable. This was done to ensure that the effects were not driven by more general attitudes toward using violence to punish children.

Participants read a vignette describing a hypothetical scenario in which the participant's daughter had committed a social norm transgression (all vignettes are presented in SOM-III). We systematically varied the publicness of the transgression. In the private transgression condition ($N = 139$), the participant was told that his daughter's transgression was known only to him and his wife (i.e., it was not publicly known), while in the public condition ($N = 130$), the participant was told that a gossipmonger in the community found out about his daughter's transgression. Given the dearth of past studies on honor violence among Indian participants, we did not know how severe transgressions would need to be for them to trigger honor-related concerns. We accordingly tested three different transgressions of varying severity levels in which the daughter (i) got drunk, (ii) wrote about her sexual fantasies in a journal, or (iii) had premarital sex. Even though premarital sex is not considered a violation in many societies, in India it is considered a serious violation of the honor code and is often met with penalties (Araji, 2000). Therefore, the study used a 3 (Severity) \times 2 (Publicness) between-subjects design.

To ensure that participants believed the publicness manipulation, we included a manipulation check question measuring perceived publicness of the transgression (the perceived likelihood of other people in their community finding out about their daughter's transgression; 1—*strongly disagree*, 7—*strongly agree*; $M = 4.20$; $SD = 1.95$). Participants in the public transgression condition ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.34$) believed that people in the community were more likely to find out about the transgression than those in the private condition ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.90$), $F(1, 267) = 107.92$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.27$, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [1.00, 1.53]. This suggests that our manipulation of publicness of transgression was successful. See our note about the publicness manipulation in SOM-III. Participants then completed a 3-item measure of perceived dishonor to their family (e.g., "How much would the incident affect your family's honor?") on a 5-point scale (1—*not at all*, 5—*a great deal*; $M = 3.36$; $SD = 1.15$; $\alpha = .84$).

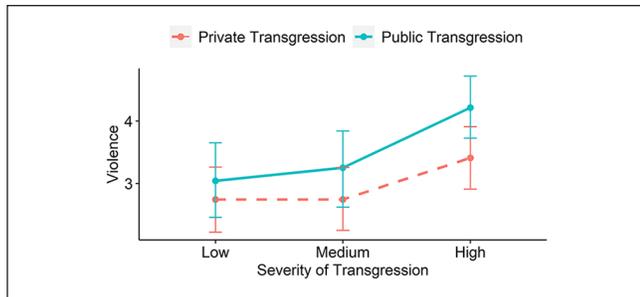


Figure 1. Violence ratings as a function of the severity and publicness of transgression (Study 1).

Note. The error bars depict 95% confidence intervals.

Following this, they rated their willingness to enact a series of actions that would symbolically distance the family from the daughter's transgression. We were most interested in violence (i.e., slapping, punching, and beating with an object; $M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.89$; $\alpha = .88$) and disowning (i.e., telling the daughter that she is no longer part of the family; $M = 2.82$, $SD = 2.00$), but we also included a measure of verbal aggression (i.e., shouting; $M = 4.87$, $SD = 2.02$). All items were rated on a 7-point scale (1—*extremely unlikely*, 7—*extremely likely*). In SOM-III, we report descriptive statistics for each type of violent response and also analysis of the verbal aggression measure.

Finally, participants provided sociodemographic information including their caste membership. Participants' caste was then grouped into four ranked categories (see SOM-II for more details): higher ($N = 144$), intermediate ($N = 100$), lower ($N = 11$), and others ($N = 14$). In all studies, very few participants belonged to the last two categories, and we therefore excluded them in models controlling for caste.

Results and Discussion

Did participants endorse distancing behaviors more after public transgressions?

Violence against the daughter. To assess the effects of publicness and severity, we used orthogonal contrasts. We created two contrast variables corresponding to linear (low = -1; medium = 0; high = 1) and quadratic (low = 1; medium = -2; high = 1) effects of severity. We also created a contrast variable for publicness (private = -1; public = 1). In addition to the main effects, we examined two orthogonal interaction terms: publicness by linear severity and publicness by quadratic severity. As shown in Figure 1, participants endorsed more violence against their daughter if her transgression was publicly known rather than unknown, $F(1, 262) = 5.70$, $p = .018$, $d = .29$, 95% CI = [.05, .53]. Also, unsurprisingly, we found a positive linear effect of severity, $F(1, 262) = 11.30$, $p < .001$, $d_{\text{high-low}} = .49$, 95% CI = [.19, .79] but did not find a quadratic effect, $F(1, 262) = 2.17$, $p = .142$. Both the interaction terms were nonsig-

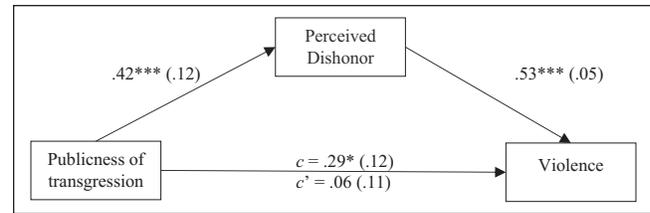


Figure 2. Model testing whether perceived dishonor mediates the effect of publicness of transgression on intentions to engage in violence (Study 1).

Note. The figure shows unstandardized coefficients.

nificant (Publicness \times linear severity: $p = .927$; Publicness \times quadratic severity: $p = .355$). The effect of publicness remained robust even when we controlled for participants' general attitude toward corporal punishment, $F(1, 224) = 6.59$, $p = .011$, and caste, $F(1, 236) = 6.03$, $p = .015$. Furthermore, consistent with the idea that honor entails both one's own and others' perceptions, people endorsed violence after relatively severe transgressions even when the transgression was private.

Disowning the daughter. We examined models using the same set of contrasts as in the violence analysis. We found a positive effect of the linear severity term such that participants endorsed disowning the daughter more after transgressions of higher severity, $F(1, 263) = 6.94$, $p = .009$, $d_{\text{high-low}} = .39$, 95% CI = [.09, .68]. We did not find a significant effect of publicness, $F(1, 263) = 1.56$, $p = .212$, $d = .15$, 95% CI = [.09, .40], but the means were in the predicted direction (i.e., the mean of disowning was higher in the public transgression condition). When we controlled for caste, the effect of publicness became marginally significant, $F(1, 237) = 3.07$, $p = .081$. Moreover, the manipulation check item measuring perceived publicness of the transgression was positively associated with disowning the transgressor, $\beta = .15$, 95% CI = [.03, .27], $t(263) = 2.41$, $p = .017$, such that a stronger belief that outsiders would find out about the transgression was associated with more willingness to disown the daughter.

Did perceived dishonor mediate the effect of publicness on distancing actions? We tested a mediation model using the JSMediation package (Batailler et al., 2021; see Figure 2) with perceived dishonor as mediator. The publicness manipulation predicted perceived dishonor such that participants reported perceiving more dishonor after public, relative to private, transgressions, $b = 0.42$, $SE = .12$, $t(267) = 3.47$, $p < .001$. Perceived dishonor was associated with participants' endorsement of violence, $b = .53$, $SE = .05$, $t(265) = 10.05$, $p < .001$. We found a significant indirect effect of publicness through perceived dishonor (IE = .22, 95% CI = [.10, .36]). The direct effect of publicness once perceived dishonor was entered in the model was not significant, $b = .06$, $SE = .11$, $t(265) = .57$, $p = .568$, providing evidence of statistical

mediation. We also conducted additional mediation analysis in the context of the full 2 (Publicness) \times 3 (Severity) factorial design, which we report in SOM-III. Controlling for the effects of severity (linear and quadratic) and the interaction of severity and publicness, the mediation effect of interest (publicness \rightarrow perceived dishonor \rightarrow violence) remained robust.

Recall that although we did not find a significant effect of the publicness manipulation on disowning, we found a positive relationship between the manipulation check item measuring perceived publicness and disowning. Therefore, we tested whether perceptions of dishonor mediated the effect of perceived publicness on disowning. Perceived publicness was associated with perceptions of dishonor, $b = 0.37$, $SE = .06$, $t(267) = 6.47$, $p < .001$, which was in turn associated with disowning the daughter, $b = 0.44$, $SE = .06$, $t(266) = 7.43$, $p < .001$. The analyses indicated a significant indirect effect of perceived publicness on disowning the daughter through perceived dishonor (IE = .16, 95% CI = [.10, .23]). Once perceived dishonor was entered in the model, the direct effect of perceived publicness was no longer significant, $b = .004$, $SE = .06$, $t(266) = .06$, $p = .952$, supporting statistical mediation. Models controlling for the effects of severity and interaction terms are presented in SOM-III.

In summary, Study 1 showed that married Indian men perceived higher levels of dishonor to their family if their daughter's transgression was publicly known in their community. Such perceptions of dishonor to the family, in turn, were associated with intentions to engage in violence against the daughter or disown her. These effects were robust controlling for caste and general attitudes toward corporal punishment.

Study 2

The main goal of Study 2 was to replicate the publicness effects in Study 1 with a modified, categorical measure of the dependent variable. Specifically, participants selected how they would respond to their daughter's transgression from a categorical list of responses. In addition to some of the distancing actions measured in Study 1 (slapping and disowning), we also provided participants with the option of responding to the transgressive daughter in a nondistancing manner, namely advising her. We expected that participants would be more likely to opt for slapping or disowning, rather than advising, the daughter after a public transgression because such actions are clear-cut signals that the family opposes the transgression, thereby helping restore the family's honor.

We also conducted exploratory analyses to determine what motivated participants' responses. Presumably, participants' actions are driven by either (a) a motivation to restore honor threatened by the transgression or (b) a motivation to prevent dishonorable transgressions from occurring in the future. We measured participants' perception regarding the extent to which the response they selected would be effective

in (a) restoring family honor and (b) preventing future dishonor. We predicted that participants who opted for distancing actions, such as violence and disowning, relative to those who opted for advising, would evaluate the response they selected as more effective in restoring honor. Finally, to test our assumption that slapping and disowning were perceived as distancing behaviors, we asked whether slapping and disowning were associated with participants' desire to distance themselves from the daughter.

Method

Participants. We recruited 353 married Indian men via MTurk and 52 of them were excluded because of failing an attention check (see SOM-IV for more details). The final sample had 301 participants ($M_{age} = 33.07$; $SD_{age} = 7.70$; 70.7% had a daughter; 98.3% college educated). Sensitivity analysis revealed that our sample had 80% power to detect a main effect of publicness of minimum size odds ratio (OR) = 1.92.

Procedure. As in Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to read a vignette describing a hypothetical scenario in which their daughter committed either a private (i.e., known only to family members; $N = 150$) or public (i.e., known to a gossip-monger in the community; $N = 151$) transgression (see SOM-IV for the vignettes). After reading the vignette, participants completed a 2-item measure of perceived dishonor to their family (e.g., "How much would the incident affect your family's honor?") on a 5-point scale ranging from 1—*not at all*, to 5—a *great deal*; $M = 3.71$; $SD = 1.12$; $\alpha = .89$).

We then provided participants with a categorical choice of responses including one nondistancing response (i.e., advising) and two distancing responses (i.e., slapping and disowning). Participants could pick one or more of these or specify that they would "say or do nothing" in response to the situation. Slapping was among the selected responses of 141 participants, but only 39 participants in the sample selected disowning among their responses. SOM-IV provides N s for the several combinations of responses.

After participants selected one or more actions as their response, they completed two exploratory measures capturing two possible motivations underlying their choice of response. Specifically, we asked participants to rate the extent to which the response they selected would help them restore lost honor ($M = 4.71$; $SD = 1.48$; $\alpha = .87$) and the extent to which their response would help them prevent dishonor in the future ($M = 4.85$; $SD = 1.54$; $\alpha = .86$). The two motivations were positively correlated, $r(298) = .39$, $p < .001$. Exploratory analysis of these measures is reported in the SOM-IV. Participants also completed an exploratory measure of their intentions to distance the daughter (e.g., "After this incident, I would distance myself from Priya"). Finally, they provided sociodemographic information including their caste ($N_{high} = 128$; $N_{intermediate} = 138$; $N_{low} = 21$; $N_{other} = 11$).

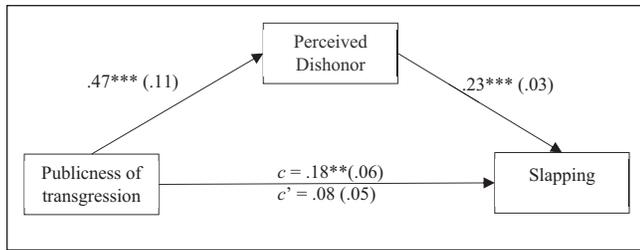


Figure 3. Model testing whether perceived dishonor mediates the effect of publicness of transgression on intentions to engage in distancing behaviors such as violence or disowning (Study 2). Note. The figure shows unstandardized coefficients.

Results and Discussion

Did participants endorse distancing behaviors more after public transgressions? We conducted a logistic regression to determine the relationship of transgression publicness on endorsement of slapping. There was a significant main effect of publicness on the likelihood of endorsing slapping such that participants endorsed slapping more after public than private transgressions ($b = .72$, $OR = 2.05$, 95% CI [1.31, 3.25], $\chi^2 = 9.3$, $p = .002$). A parallel model predicting a binary indicator of disowning revealed no effect of publicness ($b = .29$, $OR = 1.33$, 95% CI [.68, 2.66], $\chi^2 = .70$, $p = .400$), which may have reflected the fact that very few participants selected disowning.

Did perceived dishonor mediate the effect of publicness on distancing actions? To test our hypothesis that perceived dishonor would mediate the effect of publicness on slapping, we tested a mediation model. As shown in Figure 3, participants experienced more dishonor after public as compared to private transgressions, $b = .47$, $SE = .11$, $t(299) = 4.18$, $p < .001$. Perceived dishonor to family was positively associated with the likelihood of endorsing slapping, $b = .20$, $SE = .03$, $t(298) = 7.31$, $p < .001$. We found a significant indirect effect of publicness through perceived dishonor (IE = .09, 95% CI [.04, .15]). The direct effect of publicness was not significant, $b = .08$, $SE = .05$, $t(298) = 1.55$, $p = .121$, once perceived dishonor was entered into the model, providing evidence of statistical mediation.

Furthermore, exploratory analyses reported in SOM-IV revealed that participants who selected distancing responses, as opposed to nondistancing responses, particularly believed that their response would restore family honor, but we did not find a parallel difference for prevention of future dishonor. This preliminary finding suggests that people who selected distancing responses may have done so with the motivation of restoring lost honor.

Are slapping and disowning distancing behaviors? In this research, slapping and disowning have been conceptualized as behaviors that help the actor symbolically distance from the transgressor and their transgression. We tested whether

participants who selected slapping or disowning were actually concerned with such distancing. In line with our assumption, participants who selected slapping were more likely to indicate a motivation to distance the transgressive daughter ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.62$) relative to those who did not ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.42$), $t(280) = -6.0$, $p < .001$, $d = .71$, 95% CI = [.47, .94]. Similarly, people who selected disowning the daughter expressed a higher desire to distance from the daughter ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.79$) than those who did not ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.46$), $t(46) = -5.6$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.12$, 95% CI = [.77, 1.46].

In summary, Study 2 replicated Study 1's main findings with a modified version of the dependent variable. Specifically, when participants could choose among distancing (slapping or disowning) and nondistancing (advising) actions, they opted for slapping more after public transgressions, and this effect was statistically mediated by perceptions of dishonor to family. Furthermore, exploratory analyses examining two plausible motives behind participants' responses—honor restoration and future dishonor prevention—revealed that people who selected distancing rather than nondistancing responses believed that their response would help them restore threatened honor. Finally, supporting our assumption that slapping and disowning serve to distance oneself and the family's collective self from the transgression, we found that a desire to distance oneself from the transgressor was associated with endorsing both slapping and disowning.

Study 3

The first two studies provided evidence that people are especially likely to opt for distancing behaviors such as violence and disowning after public transgressions. Moreover, this effect was mediated by perceptions of dishonor. Exploratory analyses validate our conceptualization of slapping and disowning as distancing behaviors and also suggest that these responses are perceived to be strategies for restoring honor. While these studies provide preliminary insight into *when* and *why* people may endorse honor violence, they do not provide much insight into *who* is most likely to endorse such behaviors.

In Study 3, we asked whether identity fusion with the community might be associated with willingness to endorse distancing behaviors. Past work shows that strongly fused group members endorse extreme actions to protect their group's values and norms (Ashokkumar et al., 2020). We expected that people whose identities are deeply aligned (or "fused") with their community would be most motivated to restore their family's threatened honor after a violation of community values. As a result, they should be most apt to endorse distancing responses. We preregistered all the hypotheses in this study (<https://osf.io/3q4pe>), and all preregistered confirmatory analyses are reported below.

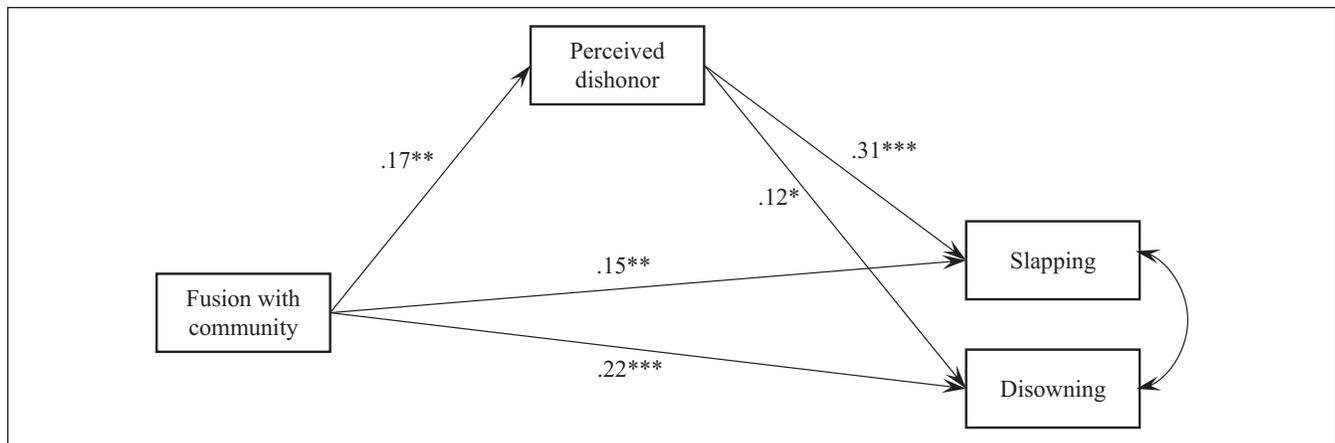


Figure 4. Path model testing the effects of fusion on two distancing responses (slapping and disowning) (Study 3).

Note. The coefficients depicted are unstandardized. Note that the direct effects of fusion on slapping and disowning after accounting for the indirect effect due to perceived dishonor were significant, indicating that perceived dishonor only partially explained fusion's effects.

Method

Participants. We recruited 337 married Indian men from MTurk. As specified in our preregistration, we had hoped to collect a sample of 316 people. After excluding 64 people who failed one of two attention checks (see SOM-V for details), we were left with a final sample of 273 participants ($M_{age} = 32.29$; $SD_{age} = 6.57$; 66.0% had a daughter; 99.2% college educated). Sensitivity analysis revealed that our sample had 80% power to detect a main effect of publicness of minimum size $d = .34$.

Procedure. Participants first completed the verbal identity-fusion scale (Gómez et al., 2011). Specifically, on 7-point scales (1—*strongly disagree*, 7—*strongly agree*; $M = 5.01$; $SD = 1.32$), participants indicated fusion with community using seven items (e.g., “I am one with my community”; $\alpha = .92$). We asked participants to consider their relatives, friends, and neighbors as constituting their community.

As in the previous studies, participants read a vignette describing a scenario in which their daughter committed a transgression (i.e., premarital sex) that was either private ($N = 136$) or public ($N = 137$) (see SOM-V for the vignettes). A manipulation check item measuring perceived publicness revealed a significant difference between the two conditions, $F(1, 271) = 15.48$, $p < .001$, $d = .48$, 95% CI = [.24, .72]. Participants then completed the same 2-item measure of perceived dishonor as in Study 2 (1—*not at all*, 5—*a great deal*; $M = 3.70$; $SD = 1.05$; $\alpha = .79$). Following this, they rated how likely they were to advise ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.48$), slap ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 2.09$), or disown their daughter (telling the daughter that she is no longer part of the family; $M = 3.44$, $SD = 2.03$) on a 7-point scale.

Finally, participants completed the same measure of distancing used in Study 2 before answering sociodemographic questions including about their caste ($N_{high} = 96$; $N_{intermediate} = 142$; $N_{low} = 10$; $N_{other} = 7$).

Results and Discussion

In our preregistration, we hypothesized that the interaction of fusion and publicness would predict slapping and disowning, but neither of the interaction effects were significant, slapping: $F(1, 262) = .13$, $p = .720$; disowning: $F(1, 262) = .15$, $p = .695$. As preregistered, given that the interaction effects did not emerge, we examined main effects of publicness and fusion.

Did participants endorse distancing behaviors more after public transgressions? Surprisingly, in contrast to the first two studies, we did not find publicness of transgression to be associated with slapping, $F(1, 263) = .53$, $p = .468$, $d = .04$, 95% CI = [−.20, .29], disowning, $F(1, 263) = .144$, $p = .232$, $d = .09$, 95% CI = [−.15, .33], or advising, $F(1, 263) = 2.19$, $p = .140$, $d = .18$, 95% CI = [−.06, .43]. There was also no effect of publicness, $F(1, 270) = .45$, $p = .503$, $d = .04$, 95% CI = [−.20, .28], on perceived dishonor. This may have been because the manipulation was not as effective as in the previous studies. The effect size for the manipulation check item ($d = .48$) was smaller than in Studies 1 ($d = 1.27$) and 4 ($d = .83$).

Were strongly fused participants more likely to enact distancing behaviors? As expected, strongly fused people were more likely to endorse distancing behaviors such as slapping, $\beta = .20$, 95% CI = [.08, .32], $t(263) = 3.34$, $p < .001$, and disowning, $\beta = .25$, 95% CI = [.13, .37], $t(263) = 4.11$, $p < .001$, but not nondistancing behaviors such as advising, $\beta = .002$, 95% CI = [−.12, .13], $t(263) = .04$, $p = .968$.

Did perceived dishonor mediate the effect of fusion on distancing actions? We used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test a path model in which the two types of distancing responses were simultaneously entered as dependent variables (see Figure 4). We allowed for residual covariances between the

two dependent variables. Consistent with the analysis reported above, there were significant direct effects of fusion on the two distancing behaviors after accounting for the mediating effect of perceived dishonor, indicating partial mediation. The effect remained robust in mediation models controlling for publicness and the interaction of fusion and publicness, which we report in SOM-V.

Are slapping and disowning distancing behaviors? As in Study 2, we validated our assumption that slapping and disowning symbolically distance the transgressor from the family. Consistent with Study 2 findings, participants' desire to distance themselves from the daughter was associated with slapping, $r(263) = .37$, 95% CI = [.26, .47], $p < .001$, and disowning, $r(263) = .58$, 95% CI = [.49, .65], $p < .001$, but not advising, $r(263) = .05$, 95% CI = [-.08, .16], $p = .469$. Although the correlation is stronger for disowning, slapping was also associated with distancing, which is in line with our conceptualization.

In summary, Study 3 showed that people who were strongly fused with their community were most likely to perceive dishonor to their family after their daughter's transgression and also most apt to endorse slapping and disowning the daughter. Perceptions of dishonor to family only partially mediated the effect of fusion. Contrary to the first two studies, the publicness manipulation in Study 3 did not affect perceptions of dishonor or their likelihood of endorsing distancing responses, which may have been because the publicness manipulation was not as effective as in the other studies. As in Study 2, the data confirmed our conceptualization of slapping and disowning as distancing responses.

Study 4

Taken together, the first three studies show that norm transgressions by family members, especially when publicly known in the community, cause dishonor to family, which is in turn associated with intentions to endorse slapping or disowning the daughter. Surprisingly, in Study 3, the publicness manipulation did not impact perceptions of dishonor or the other dependent variables. Findings from study 3 show that distancing behaviors, namely slapping and disowning, are most common among people who are strongly fused with their community, presumably because such individuals care are particularly concerned with group values and with what other community members think of them.

As shown in SOM-IV, exploratory analysis done in Study 2 also showed that participants who responded to the daughter with distancing behaviors, such as slapping and disowning, believed such responses to be effective ways of restoring honor. Study 4 builds on these findings by systematically investigating the links between distancing behaviors (violence and disowning) and honor-restoration motivations. Specifically, we directly measured the extent to which participants were motivated to restore honor and prevent future

dishonor. We expected that motivations to restore honor would underlie violence and disowning the daughter because such behaviors are clear-cut signals that the family condemns the transgression and distances itself from it, thereby helping the family proclaim loyalty to the honor code. In contrast, dishonor-preventive motivations should be primarily associated with less-extreme, nondistancing behaviors such as advising the transgressor.

Method

Participants. We recruited 330 Indian men using MTurk. We excluded 23 participants who failed one of two attention checks (see SOM-VI), leaving us with a sample of 307 participants ($M_{age} = 31.21$; $SD_{age} = 7.46$; 73.4% had a daughter; 97.6% college educated). Sensitivity analysis revealed that our sample had 80% power to detect a main effect of publicness of minimum size $d = .32$.

Procedure. Participants first completed the verbal identity-fusion scale (Gómez et al., 2011) measuring fusion with their community on a 7-point scale ($M = 5.39$; $SD = 1.05$; $\alpha = .91$). Following this, they read a vignette in which their daughter committed either a private ($N = 156$) or public ($N = 151$) norm transgression. This and previous vignettes are presented in the SOM. Participants then completed a 1-item manipulation check of their perception that other people in the community would find out about the transgression ($M = 4.77$; $SD = 1.69$). There was a significant difference in the manipulation check item between the two conditions, $F(1, 288) = 49.6$, $p < .001$, $d = .83$, 95% CI = [.59, 1.07]. They also completed a 2-item measure of perceived dishonor to family on a 5-point scale (1—*not at all*, 5—a *great deal*; $M = 3.49$; $SD = 1.08$; $\alpha = .81$).

Participants rated 2-item measures of two motivations: (a) the extent to which they were motivated to restore honor (e.g., "In this situation, my main focus would be to restore my family's lost honor"; $\alpha = .85$) and (b) the extent to which they were motivated to prevent future dishonor (e.g., "In this situation, my main focus would be to ensure that my family is not dishonored in the future"; $\alpha = .81$). As shown in Table 1, the two types of motivations were positively correlated.

Participants also rated how likely they were to advise, slap, or disown (i.e., tell the daughter that she is no longer part of the family) their daughter. Finally, they completed the same measure of distancing as in the previous studies before answering sociodemographic questions including caste ($N_{high} = 100$; $N_{intermediate} = 169$; $N_{low} = 20$; $N_{other} = 5$). Means, standard deviations, and intervariable correlations are presented in Table 1.

Results and Discussion

Did participants endorse distancing behaviors more after public transgressions? People endorsed slapping more after public

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables Measured in Study 4.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Identity fusion with community	5.39	1.05							
2. Perceived dishonor	3.49	1.08	.29**						
3. Honor-restoration motivation	5.09	1.51	.35**	.54**					
4. Dishonor-prevention motivation	5.10	1.48	.27**	.31**	.48**				
5. Advising	5.94	1.28	.13*	.22**	.27**	.33**			
6. Slapping	4.16	2.03	.24**	.54**	.49**	.22**	.06		
7. Disowning	3.61	2.09	.24**	.36**	.41**	.16**	-.13*	.63**	
8. Distancing	2.98	1.45	.08	.15**	.20**	.01	-.32**	.36**	.57**

Note. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

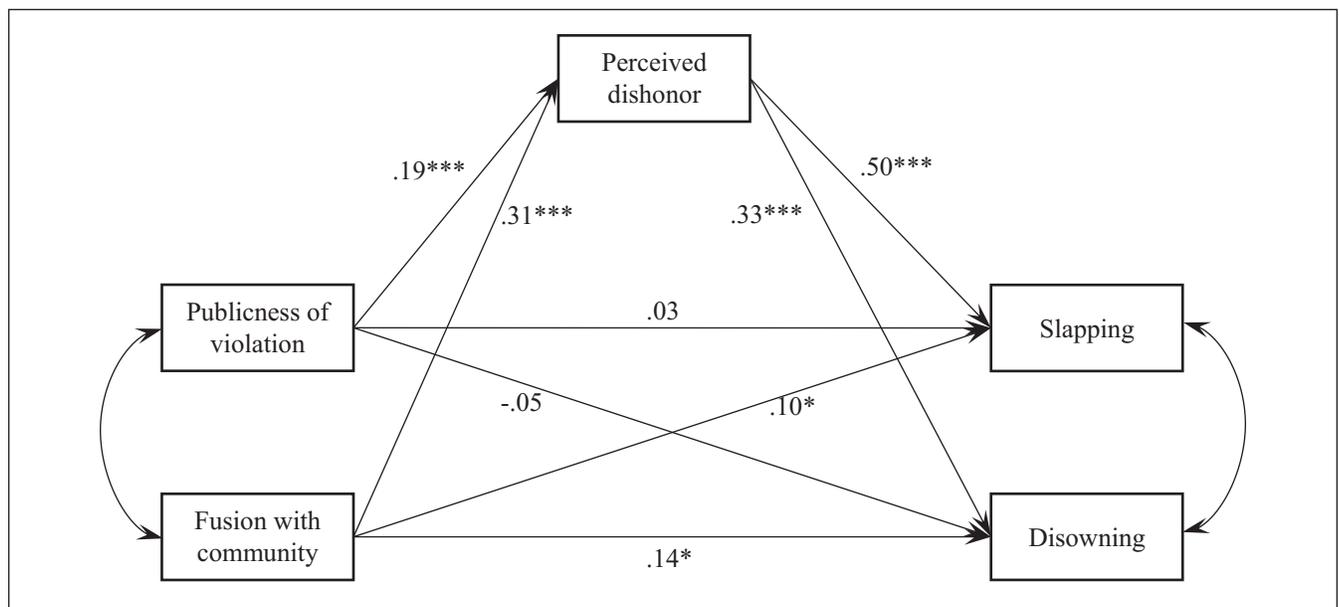


Figure 5. Path model examining the effects of publicness of violation and fusion with community on distancing behaviors via perceptions of dishonor (Study 4).

Note. The path coefficients represent standardized betas to compare effects across constructs measured using differing scales. After accounting for the indirect effects through the mediator, the direct effects of publicness on the distancing behaviors were not significant, which is evidence for mediation. The direct effects of fusion were significant, indicating partial mediation.

transgressions ($M = 4.38, SD = 2.03$) than private ones ($M = 3.95, SD = 2.02$), $F(1, 299) = 5.25, p = .023, d = .21, 95\% CI = [.02, .44]$. The publicness manipulation was not related to endorsement of disowning the daughter, $F(1, 301) = .07, p = .790, d = .01, 95\% CI = [-.21, .24]$. Nevertheless, as in Study 1, the manipulation check item measuring perceived publicness of the transgression was associated with disowning, $\beta = .25, 95\% CI = [.14, .36], t(284) = 4.41, p < .001$, suggesting that people endorsed disowning more if they perceived the transgression to be widely known.

Were strongly fused participants more likely to endorse distancing behaviors? Fusion was positively associated with slapping, $\beta = .25, 95\% CI = [.14, .36], t(299) = 4.54, p < .001$,

and disowning, $\beta = .24, 95\% CI = [.13, .35], t(301) = 4.23, p < .001$, the daughter.

Did perceived dishonor mediate the effects of publicness and fusion on distancing actions?

As shown in Figure 5, we tested a path model with both predictors (publicness and fusion), the two distancing behaviors (slapping and disowning), and the hypothesized mediator (perceived dishonor). As indicated by the path coefficients in the figure, the direct effects of publicness on the outcomes after accounting for the indirect of perceived dishonor were not significant, indicating that perceptions of dishonor statistically mediated the effect of publicness. However, the direct paths from fusion to the two distancing behaviors remained

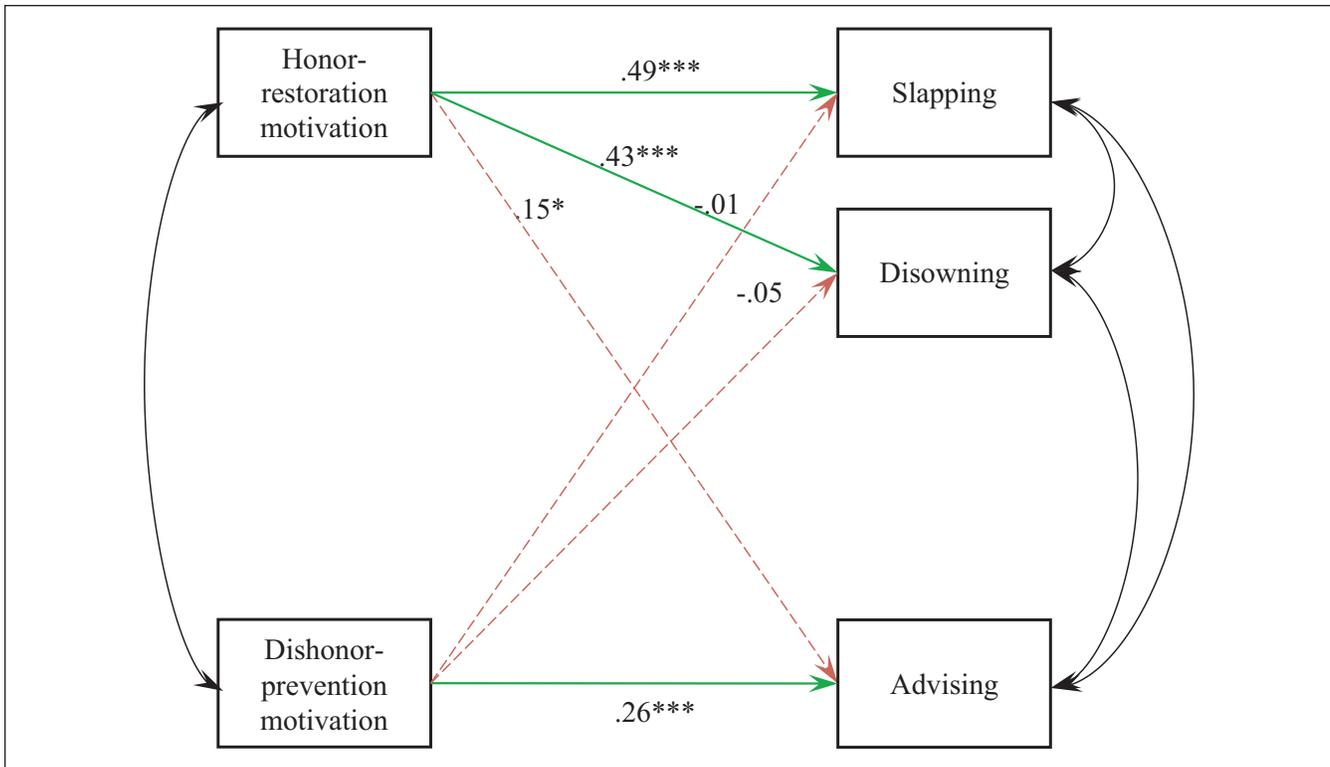


Figure 6. Path model testing the associations between two honor-related motivations—honor restoration and dishonor prevention—with slapping, disowning, and advising (Study 4).

Note. The green-colored solid paths represent the hypothesized effects, and the red-colored dashed paths correspond to associations that we hypothesized to be nonsignificant. The path coefficients represent standardized betas to compare effects across constructs.

significant, indicating only partial mediation of the fusion effects. As reported in SOM-VI, the mediation effects remained robust when we included the interaction of publicness and fusion.

Were distancing behaviors associated with a motivation to restore honor? The zero-order pairwise correlations between the motivations and behaviors were all positive and significant (see Table 1). Nevertheless, given that our hypotheses involved differential effects—honor-restoration motivations would be *primarily* associated with distancing behaviors such as slapping or disowning, and dishonor-prevention motivations would be *primarily* associated with relatively nondistancing behaviors such as advising, we tested a SEM model. Specifically, we tested a path model examining links from the two motivations to the three behaviors (green and red colored paths in Figure 6) while accounting for the shared variance between the two motivations and within the behaviors. As indicated by the path coefficients in Figure 6, after accounting for interrelationships within motivations and behaviors, slapping and disowning were predicted by a motivation to restore honor but not by a motivation to prevent future dishonor. Advising was predicted by both the motivations, but the path from dishonor prevention was stronger.

We then directly tested our hypothesis by comparing the model in Figure 6 with a more parsimonious, nested model that included only the hypothesized regression paths (i.e., the green and black colored paths in Figure 6). If our hypothesis is correct, the parsimonious model should fit the data as well as the full model. The nested, parsimonious model had good fit (root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .07, competitive fit index [CFI] = .99), and a likelihood ratio test comparing the nested model with the full model suggested only marginal change in model fit ($\chi^2 = 7.11$, $df = 3$, $p = .069$), indicating that the model without the red colored paths explains as much variance as the less-parsimonious model with all the paths. Simply put, the more parsimonious model was preferred. This suggests that behaviors such as slapping and disowning are primarily driven by a motivation to restore honor, while advising is mainly driven by a motivation to prevent future dishonor. In SOM-VI, we test a comprehensive theoretical model with the goal of developing an understanding of the cognitive underpinnings of honor-based violence.

In summary, Study 4 confirmed the previous findings that perceptions of dishonor to family are higher after public transgressions and among people fused with their communities. Perceived dishonor was, in turn, associated with slapping and disowning. As in previous studies, the publicness

manipulation did not impact disowning, but the manipulation check item measuring perceived publicness was associated with disowning the daughter. Mediation analyses suggest that perceptions of dishonor to family fully mediate the effects of publicness and partially mediate the effect of fusion. There may be other mediators explaining fusion's effect. For instance, past work suggests that people who are strongly fused with a community may care most about the community's values and norms. They may also care most about their family's reputation within the community, which should make them especially willing to endorse reputation-restoring strategies. In line with this logic, exploratory analysis reported in the SOM indicates that strongly fused people were particularly motivated to restore honor, which in turn was associated with distancing behaviors.

Furthermore, our SEM analyses suggest that slapping and disowning may be uniquely associated with a motivation to restore honor, while advising is primarily associated with a motivation to prevent future dishonor. Furthermore, replicating exploratory findings from Studies 2 and 3, supplementary analysis indicated that slapping and disowning are associated with an intent to distance the transgressive daughter, corroborating our thesis that distancing responses may be strategically employed against the daughter to restore family honor.

Pooled Analysis

The four studies generally converged on the finding that Indian men endorsed distancing responses to their daughters' transgressions especially if the transgression was public and if their identities were fused with their community. However, the effect of publicness on slapping did not emerge in one of the studies (Study 3), and the effect of publicness on disowning was generally inconsistent. A further concern was raised by the fact that the publicness manipulation in each study used only vignette per condition, raising the possibility that the effects emerged because of idiosyncrasies of each pair of vignettes. To address these issues, we pooled the samples.

Method

We pooled data from Studies 1, 3, and 4 to obtain a combined sample of 849 participants ($M_{age} = 32.51$; $SD_{age} = 7.37$; 85.6% had a child; 69.7% had a daughter). Study 2 was left out because its measure of distancing behaviors was different from the other studies. A sensitivity analysis revealed that our sample had 80% power to detect a main effect of publicness of minimum $d = .17$.

Results

Did participants endorse distancing behaviors more after public transgressions? A robust main effect of publicness on slapping emerged. People endorsed slapping more after public

transgressions ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 2.07$) than private ones ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 2.15$), $F(1, 832) = 7.49$, $p = .006$, $d = .19$, 95% CI = [.05, .33]. The effect of publicness on slapping remained robust controlling for whether the participant had a daughter ($p = .011$).

Interestingly, the publicness manipulation was not related to endorsement of disowning the daughter, $F(1, 835) = 1.10$, $p = .290$, $d = .07$, 95% CI = [-.06, .21], but as in Studies 1 and 4, the manipulation check item measuring perceived publicness of the transgression was associated with disowning, $\beta = .20$, 95% CI = [.13, .26], $t(818) = 5.67$, $p < .001$, suggesting that people endorsed disowning more if they perceived the transgression to be widely known.

Were strongly fused participants more likely to endorse distancing behaviors? Fusion was positively associated with slapping, $\beta = .22$, 95% CI = [.14, .30], $t(565) = 5.39$, $p < .001$, and disowning, $\beta = .24$, 95% CI = [.16, .32], $t(567) = 5.83$, $p < .001$, the daughter. The effects of fusion on slapping ($p < .001$) and disowning ($p < .001$) remained robust when we controlled for whether the participant had a daughter.

Did participants who were parents respond differently to the vignettes? Participants with children, especially those with daughters, should be best positioned to respond to the vignettes in this research. Participants who were parents endorsed higher levels of slapping, $F(1, 804) = 6.74$, $p = .01$, $d = .26$, 95% CI = [.06, .45], and disowning, $F(1, 807) = 5.15$, $p = .02$, $d = .23$, 95% CI = [.03, .42], than those without children. Participants with a daughter were also marginally more likely to endorse distancing actions such as slapping, $F(1, 807) = 3.65$, $p = .06$, $d = .15$, 95% CI = [-.003, .30], and disowning, $F(1, 810) = 4.07$, $p = .04$, $d = .16$, 95% CI = [.006, .31]. Nevertheless, participants' parent status did not moderate the effects of publicness or fusion. The fact that parents, particularly parents of daughters, endorsed distancing actions *more* suggests that our findings based on hypothetical scenarios reflect what people would actually do.

General Discussion

Most people experience shock and disbelief when they learn that a father has assaulted or killed a daughter for violating a gendered norm or convention. And when evidence for honor violence is believed, it is often consigned to the domain of the irrational or psychopathological. Our findings challenge this characterization of honor violence. Instead, our results suggest that honor violence toward daughters grows out of a rational, social calculation aimed at upholding honor and repairing social ties (Fiske & Rai, 2014; Wikan, 2009). That is, when Indian men encountered evidence of a serious norm violation committed by their daughter, they endorsed responding by slapping or disowning her. Violent responses were especially likely if the violation was believed to be publicly known to

others in their community or if the participant perceived his community to be a defining aspect of his identity (i.e., his identity was “fused” with the community). Mediation analyses consistently showed that a desire to avoid perceptions of dishonor were associated with such violence.

Our findings align with evidence that insults diminishing a man’s honor lead to aggression as a means of restoring honor (Vandello et al., 2009). Nevertheless, most previous empirical demonstrations of these relationships examined aggression against nonkin (Cohen et al., 1996) or jealousy-related domestic violence against romantic partners (Vandello et al., 2009) with only a handful of studies directly examining honor violence against blood relatives. Our findings extend this work by showing that honor violence against transgressive daughters is also a strategic response designed to restore family honor.

The results of our studies also complement previous work by disentangling the motivation to *restore* honor from a related but distinct motivation to *prevent* future dishonor. That is, we found that a desire to restore honor-motivated slapping and disowning the daughter. Presumably, violence and disowning are both designed to achieve the social goal of signaling the family’s distance from the transgression and affirming its allegiance to the violated norm, thereby preserving family honor. In contrast, counseling the daughter is designed to achieve the interpersonal goal of providing the daughter with the tools to make optimal life choices such as avoiding social transgressions.

In theory, a concern with the honor of the family may not have motivated fathers in our studies. Instead, their embrace of slapping or disowning the daughter may have reflected a desire to demonstrate control and dominance and thereby protect their own masculine honor. This argument, however, cannot explain the fact that perceived dishonor to *family* mediated the reactions of fathers to the behaviors of transgressive daughters. The importance of the goal of maintaining family honor is also supported by anecdotal evidence that mothers participate in honor-based violence against daughters.

Whatever the precise mechanism underlying our findings may be, they underscore the importance of shifting attention from the relatively notorious forms of honor-related violence, such as honor killings to more mundane forms of such violence. One compelling reason for this shift is that more mundane forms of honor violence are far more common. Note, for example, the surprisingly strong support for slapping in our studies—the average rating for the slapping item across our studies was 4.16 on a 7-point scale—despite participants being highly educated.

Our foray into the relatively novel domain of honor violence against daughters raises new questions. One such question is the relation between two types of distancing behaviors, slapping and disowning. Although the two behaviors have several differences, they have important similarities. Slapping a transgressive daughter or telling her that she is no longer part of the family are both clear-cut ways of signaling strong disapproval of the transgression, thereby distancing oneself and the

family from the transgression. The behaviors thus serve the symbolic purpose of demonstrating the family’s moral resolve and restoring the family’s honor. Note that telling the daughter that she is not part of the family may not mean that the family actually banishes her from the home; rather, it is common for families to wield such threats for their symbolic value (Cooney, 2014). Future research might investigate whether honor-motivated violence or disowning need to be publicly enacted for it to be effective.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current research is not without limitations. First, due to the unavailability of public archival records on honor violence in India, we relied on a vignette-based approach. Future work should try to access relevant archival data from other contexts. Another approach would be to ask people about their past behaviors, although this may be challenging because people may be reluctant to divulge information that cast their families in a bad light. Second, our studies used single vignettes per condition, and the vignettes were not always standardized for reasons we articulated in SOM-III. Note that the vignettes were varied across studies and the main findings were robust in a pooled analysis, but future work should replicate the findings using multiple vignettes per condition and better standardization. Third, our mediational evidence is correlational, which need to be tested casually in the future (Bullock et al., 2010). Finally, although one of the strengths of this work is that we studied a non-WEIRD, rarely examined sample, our exclusive focus on Indian men raises the need for future work to test the findings across multiple cultures.

Future research might also examine other, less-conspicuous, problems produced by honor-related processes. For instance, families may avert dishonor by pre-emptively controlling and restricting the actions of family members, thereby constricting their life opportunities. Future research might also expand the pool of perpetrators of honor violence. As noted above, fathers are not the only agents of honor violence toward daughters; other family members (e.g., mothers, sisters, and brothers) have reportedly been involved in various attempts to restore honor.

One final topic for future research could be the links between identity fusion and honor violence toward daughters. Our findings extend past research on group identity by demonstrating that people whose identities are most strongly fused with their community are particularly apt to endorse violence against transgressive daughters. Future research may investigate whether identity fusion with other persons (the daughter or the entire family) might influence the likelihood of violent responses to transgressions.

Implications

This work is an attempt to respond to calls for individual-level-focused research asking who endorses honor-based

violence, and when and why they do so (Leung & Cohen, 2011). While cross-cultural studies are of great importance, exclusive reliance on cultural membership as a predictor of honor-based violence may inadvertently suggest that such violence is inevitable in “honor cultures” (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009) even when violence is not normative in many honor cultures (Sommers, 2018). The current research goes beyond broad cross-cultural comparisons and highlights the individual-level motivations of those engaging in honor-related violence against daughters.

Our findings are consistent with the notion that the individual-level motivations underlying violence are benign and foster behaviors designed “to make relationships right” (Fiske & Rai, 2014). As such, this work aligns with recent evidence that the benign motives that give rise to tribalism (Ashokkumar et al., 2019) and moral conviction (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2011) can sometimes produce similarly problematic outcomes. Further elaboration of the mechanisms that lead to honor-based violence will not only deepen our understanding of the human condition but will also move us closer to designing interventions to reduce this extremely troubling form of violence.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Alexi Martel, Philip Moniz, and James Quay for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article. They also thank Cédric Batailler and Elliot Tucker-Drob for their help with the data analysis.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material is available online with this article.

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