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Violent and peaceful crowd reactions in the Middle East: cultural experiences and expectations

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Collective honor in Middle Eastern crowds may serve as an important basis for both conflict and conflict resolution between security forces and crowd members. To investigate this issue, we extended a social–cognitive model of crowd behavior to account for the role of honor in social identities and relations, and tested the model in two studies. In Study 1, we collected critical incidents representing crowd experiences in the Middle East. The interview data were coded to include security actions that escalate force and those that generate understanding or exhibit restraint. Study 2 used a scenario-based interview procedure to test the hypothesis that Middle Eastern civilians and Americans with no Middle Eastern cultural experience hold differing beliefs and expectations about crowd reactions to security force actions. The results showed that escalation of force against the crowd led to an increase in the level of conflict more often than not, whereas attempting to understand the crowd or exhibiting restraint tended to decrease conflict. Middle Eastern expectations were largely congruent with these findings, whereas American beliefs diverged. The results have implications regarding the cultural and cognitive determinants of crowd behavior, and for the management of crowds by regional governments and in international peacekeeping situations.

Keywords: culture and cognition; honor; Arab spring; intercultural interaction

In March 2006, a crowd of Kurds gathered in protest near the Halabja Monument. In an attempt to disperse the crowd, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan guards fired warning shots into the air from their machine guns. Rather than quelling the demonstration, the enraged crowd members braved the gun fire to drive the panicked guards away and attack the monument. They smashed windows and set fires, ultimately destroying the memorial that commemorated the day that Saddam's government killed more than 5,000 people by poison gas attacks in 1988. One 17-year old protestor was shot and killed, and six others were wounded. (Worth, 2006)

Peaceful gatherings can provide an important means for people to feel that they have a stake in the success of free and open societies that sanction collective action. When such gatherings turn violent and destructive, they can instead serve to support terrorist and insurgent agendas. Relatively new or less stable governments, such as in some Middle Eastern countries, are likely to be especially vulnerable in this regard. The critical nature of such events leads us to address the question of why violent reactions

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sometimes occur in protests and other gatherings, and why others remain relatively peaceful, even when the political stakes are enormous.

One possible explanation comes from notions that crowd membership drives people towards irrationality and destructiveness (Le Bon, 1947). The irrationality concept is perhaps most enticing in its ability to explain crowd violence by ordinary citizens. According to this view, crowd membership leads to mindlessness and irrationality caused by de-individuation (loss of self), leading to an increase in destructive tendencies (Le Bon, 1947; Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1982). Arab crowds have at times been described in similar terms, including the explicit suggestion that there is little one can do about it. For example, Patai's (2002) ethnography on Arabs includes the following excerpt:

> the rank and file supplied the mass of manpower and the outflow of emotionalism which inundated the capital's [Baghdad's] streets whenever a popular uprising occurred. In the past (prior to the 1958 revolution), though popular uprisings caused damage to life and property ... they were like the floods of the river Tigris, capable of destruction but short-lived and quickly exhausted. The ruling Oligarchy well understood the nature of those outbursts and learned how to cope with them by letting the flood pass swiftly, and the police often tried merely to channel it and clear the wreckage. (Patai, 2002, p. 171)

Such simple explanations have been largely debunked within the social psychology literature on crowd behavior, and have been replaced with models that maintain the rationality of the individuals involved (Couch, 1968). Here, we propose a more complex explanation of Arab crowd behavior in particular, drawing on a social identity model of crowd membership, combined with considerations of honor as experienced in the Middle East (Gregg, 2005; Reicher, 1996).

The Social Identity Model of crowd membership emphasizes the self-concepts of crowd members, and provides mechanisms for understanding how conceptions of the self and related outcomes, such as self-efficacy, change through participation in crowd events (Stott & Drury, 2000). According to the model, social identity is a mental model of one's position in a set of social relations along with actions that are possible and legitimate given such a position. Social identities thus support decision-making in crowd situations. Core assumptions of the model include that crowd members retain their rationality, although in-group goals and values do become more salient to each person. Also, members tend to view their actions as anonymous to out-groups, but they perceive their acts as being highly visible to the in-group of fellow crowd members. Hence, they are very much aware of and subject to the appraisal of their peers. Finally, crowd members experience increased feelings of power or self-efficacy as members of the collective (Drury & Reicher, 1999).

Social identities are also subject to change as a result of participation in crowd events (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Stott & Drury, 2000). To understand the mechanisms by which changes come about, elaborations of the model emphasize that crowd events are characteristically intergroup encounters, and that the various groups can hold distinct understandings of the crowd members' social identity (i.e roles within the event, and society more generally). In particular, Drury and Reicher (2000) proposed that changes in self-understanding can arise when crowd members hold a different model of their social identity from that of security forces. For example, Drury and Reicher documented a case in which English participants in an environmental protest originally saw themselves as respectable citizens enacting a democratic right and responsibility to voice their concerns within a neutral state. However, after a severe

crackdown by security forces intended to bring about a quick dispersal of the crowd, the crowd participants came to see themselves as radicals who stood in opposition to a biased state. Although these British demonstrators did not react violently, the changes in self-concept they experienced following the event were associated with consequences such as loss of trust, and an increase in fear of the police. In this case, the crowd participants' self-efficacy also presumably decreased as an outcome of the crowd event. In other cases, successful collective action has been shown to lead to increases in feelings of power among crowd members (Drury & Reicher, 1999). The Social Identity Model of crowd behavior was developed based on studies of Western populations. How does it apply to understanding crowds in the Middle East? Specifically, what cultural considerations would be expected to influence the form that social identities take in the Middle East?

In the Middle East and elsewhere, one's honor or 'face' is an important measure of how one appears to others, and how that image reflects on one's family (Feghali, 1997). Honor is considered a predominant value system that spans the Middle East, and one that is distinct from and sometimes at odds with Islamic values (Gregg, 2005). For example, Gregg (2005) notes that, 'Ethnographies from nearly all MENA [Middle East and North Africa] cultures suggest that the region is characterized by two predominant value systems and their associated interpersonal etiquettes and self-care practices: that of "honor-and-modesty" and that of Islam' (p. 90). Although many subtleties exist,[1] conceptions of honor are generally associated with two primary aspects, the protection of women belonging to one's in-group, and the aggressiveness of men towards other, out-group men. The honor system has been described as having historical roots in societies surrounding the Mediterranean, with facets of it having spread across the Middle East, well into south-central Asia, and to a variety of other locations. For example, although 'manliness in men' tends to be discouraged and even ridiculed in Western-middle class cultures, several researchers have pointed out that subcultures of honor thrive within them (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Peristiany, 1965).

In the case of crowd situations, in-group/out-group considerations and male aggression seem the most relevant facets for understanding Middle Eastern crowd members' social identities. In the typical depiction of such aggression, insult or injury is treated as an attack on one's reputation and status, and one must retaliate and re-establish honor and status through an aggressive response. In line with this generalized portrayal, researchers have experimentally demonstrated that cultural differences in the propensity towards violence relate to the value of honor (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle, & Schwarz, 1996). Another critical component of honor as related to the Social Identity Model is the inherent demand to perform with style under the scrutiny of others in the social context (Gregg, 2005). Recall that the Social Identity Model implies heightened in-group visibility in crowd situations. Honor can be seen as the assertion and defense of one's public image, as reported by Peristiany (1965), 'nothing is accepted on credit, the individual is constantly forced to prove and assert himself . . . he is constantly "on show," he is forever courting the public opinion of his "equals" so that they may pronounce him worthy' (p. 11). Other research further suggests that, in at least some cultures, honor is not only given by one's peers, but also projected to them. For instance, a primary concern for the group's honor, as shared by its individual members, was found in a classic ethnographic study of Egyptian Bedouins (Abou Zeid, 1965). This facet of honor is probably held within the Middle East, more broadly, as Bedouin concepts of honor and other values are generally regarded as having had a strong regional influence (Moracco, 1983). Hence, the notion of 'group honor' is potentially pertinent to Middle

Eastern social identities in crowds, given that in-group loyalties and goals tend to be highly elevated according to the Social Identity Model. In these situations, an affront to any one individual crowd member may be taken as threatening the group's honor and demand a collective response.

Abou Zeid's and other studies also suggest that aggressive action towards outsider men produces especially large gains in honor when such action is taken against a larger or more powerful adversary, as indicated in the following quote. 'Bedouin society which admires, and in fact encourages, attacks on the camps of strong and powerful clans considers it a most shameful action to violate the rights of the poor and the weak' (Abou Zeid, 1965, p. 246). This impetus to take on larger foes typically appears to come with a complimentary lack of concern with risks to one's own physical well-being, or even life itself. Findings from a study of Algeria's Kabyle region are suggestive (Bourdieu, 1965): 'This stake for the Kabyle is worth more than life itself. [Honor] is also the desire to overcome one's rival in man-to-man struggle' (p. 204) and, '[Honor] is above all in the action of defending, cost what it may, a certain public image of oneself' (p. 208).

As described above, from the perspective of the social identity model of crowd behavior, honor may serve as an important cultural contributor to conflict between security forces and crowd members in the context of Middle Eastern crowd events. In particular, the degree of in-group visibility afforded by crowd membership provides an opportunity to prove oneself in the eyes of one's peers. This may be especially true to the extent that clear in-group/out-group divisions are created between crowd members and security forces. At the same time, crowd members may be expected to take personal responsibility for the group's honor in the situation. These considerations of honor further suggest that Middle Eastern crowd members may be especially likely to oppose an aggressive security force, even at great risk to their own personal safety. Note that this does not imply irrationality in the Le Bon sense, but rather suggests that a deeply held shared value, made even more salient in the crowd context according to the Social Identity Model, can lead to violent confrontations. In addition to this hypothesis, we also expect that core elements of the Social Identity Model would generalize to crowds in the Middle East, including cognitively rational assessments and goal-driven behavior, increased self-efficacy as a result of successful crowd participation, and the link between social relations and permissible actions.

Study 1: crowd incidents in the Middle East

The purpose of Study 1 was to test a specific implication of the concept of honor as a prevalent value that regulates perceptions and decisions in the Middle East. In particular, we elicited and examined crowd incidents to determine whether security force actions that were readily construed by crowd members as diminishing honor led to increases in crowd member resistance, as compared with security force actions that enhanced or did not affect honor.

In Study 1, we employed critical incident interviews to study the crowd experiences of populations in the Middle East, eliciting information about the knowledge, goal structures, and judgment and decision processes underlying observable actions of participants in the crowd context (Flanagan, 1954; Hoffman, Crandall, & Shadbolt, 1998; Sieck, McHugh, & Smith, 2006).

Method

Participants

We collected 36 incidents from 25 people in the United States and Lebanon representing experiences with crowds in the Middle East from multiple perspectives. We conducted interviews with 11 people from the Middle East (54% from Lebanon, 18% from Egypt, 18% from Palestine and 9% from Jordan) who had participated in demonstrations there. Middle Eastern crowd participant interviewees were identified by professional recruiters who engaged local community centers, social networks and existing panels. Selection criteria that interviewees had to have been born and raised in the Middle East, have participated in at least one demonstration in the region, and be at least 18 years of age. We also interviewed 14 military personnel who were either native to the Middle East (36%), or had advanced cultural knowledge of the Middle East (64%), as well as specific experiences managing crowds in that region. These interviewees were identified via military contacts, and selected based on peer-nomination of Middle Eastern cultural expertise, and at least one experience managing a crowd in the region. Interviews were conducted in the summer and autumn of 2005, in English and Arabic. Most of the Arab participants spoke conversational English, although a translator was available to facilitate communication of difficult concepts and nuances. Two of the interviews were conducted entirely through a translator. The level of detail and key findings were comparable across these interview approaches.

Interview guide

The general structure of the interview guide is described below. The interviews were semi-structured, organized around an initial account of a specific incident provided by the interviewee. The interviewers then revisited and inquired further about various aspects of the incident to gather additional information. The incident account was generated by the interviewee in response to a specific open-ended question posed by the interviewers, such as 'Can you tell us about a time when you were part of a demonstration or protest of some sort?' Once the participant had identified a relevant incident, he or she was asked to recount the episode in its entirety without interruption from the interviewer. The interviewee's account of the incident provided the basic structure for the remainder of the interview. Next, the elicitors and participant constructed a map of the situation to help clarify the positions of crowd members, the physical context and any constraints, and the unfolding of crowd events. The participant was asked for relative times and places of key events and turning points within the incident. The aims were to elicit the salient events within the incident, including cognitive events, such as points where understanding changed, or where judgments or decisions were made.

The interviewers then led the participant back over his or her incident several times, in order to elicit additional details about key aspects of the account. Examples of probe questions used to gather more detailed information included:

- How did you recognize the crowd was changing?
- What were your concerns at that point?
- What were you noticing right then?
- How did you know that?
- What led you to this decision?

- What was it about the situation that let you know what was going on?
- What were you trying to accomplish at that moment?
- What was your biggest challenge at this point?

Once the actual events had been described sufficiently, the interviewers asked some additional questions to gain insights into the participants' understanding of how things work in the situation. An example question is, 'What if the security forces had taken action X? How would things have turned out differently?'

Procedure

Participants were interviewed individually by a pair of trained interviewers. An Arabic translator was available during all of the interviews with Middle Easterners, and the translator joined the interview to facilitate communication between the interviewer and interviewees as necessary. The interviews with crowd participants were audio recorded; the military participants declined permission to record. The duration of each interview was approximately 1.5–2 h. Crowd participants received $75 as compensation for their time, while the crowd controllers did not receive compensation because of their military status. Data records were created for each interviewee, consisting of either the interviewer's notes (if interview was not taped) or a transcript of the interview and a summary of the incident.

Results

The data included a number of incidents depicting specific crowd experiences in the Middle East, from either the crowd participants' or security forces' point of view. We conducted a thematic analysis to identify patterns of related topics across the data. We relay general examples of excerpts from these incidents that illustrate specific themes, and then describe a quantitative analysis of the data. First, as an example of the 'rational cognition' theme, a Palestinian man recounts an incident in the street near his home, illustrating that some crowd members explicitly engage in a rational assessment of the weapons and level of force being directed towards them:

> You become an expert at knowing whether they are using rubber bullets. You would know because it's a big size magazine connected to the rifle, and that the noise is different from a rifle. You hear whether it's live ammunition in the air.

In another example, a Lebanese woman recounts her participation in a demonstration in Beirut to increase teachers' salaries. The protestors again act quite rationally, leaving peacefully after determining that their goals have been met:

> About a half an hour after the cameras left is when the crowd started to disperse. After the cameras left we thought our story was now going to get out and so everybody went home. We didn't really know whether the teachers ended up getting a pay raise, but we did see the demonstration on TV. There, the government said they would have meetings with the teachers. We felt that we got our message out by watching people say things about the message, and we were happy with ourselves; feeling that we did something good.

The example shows how the participants assessed that their goals were met, so that they knew when to stop the demonstration. It also illustrates the psychological effects,

including an increased self-efficacy that accompanied and persisted beyond the crowd members' decision to end the event. The following incident from Lebanon provides an example of a theme concerning the link between social relations and actions. It also shows de-escalation following a potential flash point when the security force exhibits heroic levels of restraint:

> A Shia crowd had blocked off the roads to the airport near Beirut. They used tires that were set on fire, and cement blocks and barrels full of concrete to close off the two roads leading to the airport. The overall area was quite large, and the number of crowd members was around 500. Civilian cars that were coming up to the airport stopped and created a big traffic jam. The Lebanese Army officer and his troops were sent to clear the road. When the security forces arrived, the crowd became more violent. Members of the crowd are waving sticks around, and throwing many stones. Then something happens. A member of Hezbollah within the crowd throws a grenade at the security forces. Fifteen members of the security team were hurt. The soldiers expected the stones, but not a grenade. It was an immediate challenge for the officer to keep his men calm and not fire at the crowd. They took positions and held their ground, but he convinced his men not to shoot. The rules of engagement said they could not shoot unarmed civilians. But the grenade meant that the crowd could be treated as armed, and the security forces could shoot. Both sides realized this. It changed the tone of the crowd from strongly aggressive to being less certain. It calmed them down. After the grenade, other members in the crowd seemed shocked and they moved back on their own. They knew the security forces had the right to fire. When the crowd advanced again, the security force moved forward slowly and called out to the crowd members to negotiate. There was a lot of talking, but then the situation ended without further violence.

This incident illustrates a co-shifting of permissible actions and evaluations according to fluctuating social identities in the context of the situation. In light of the Social Identity Model, we suggest that crowd members make decisions with reference to tacitly held sets of actions, with acceptability depending on social context. The informal rules of action considered legitimate by different subgroups can shift throughout the crowd event. Sub-groups try to assess each other's informal action rules, and they modify their own behavior based on that assessment. The action rules within the crowd can cycle back and forth to higher and lower levels of escalation. As another example of social relation/action links in the Middle Eastern cultural context, consider the following example described by an Arab-American Marine who was part of a team that had intercepted some bank robbers in Baghdad in 2003:

> The Iraqis were standing there quietly watching the events; they seemed curious . . . then some of the men began saying, 'Haram' – meaning 'shame' or 'it's too bad.' This started spreading throughout the crowd. The crowd told the security force officer that he needed to go see the old man. He understood what the problem was as soon as he walked down the sidewalk to the old man. The bank robbers, cuffed and laying on the concrete sidewalk, were not comfortable. One of these men was in his late 50s or 60s – he was a gray hair. He was a little frail. The crowd could clearly see that he was in pain. Then crowd began complaining about the way that the old man was being treated. The elder was in obvious discomfort. They told the security force officer that he should let the old man go. Crowd members started shouting, 'Let him go.' The crowd started to become more agitated and angrier. The security force officer treated the elder with respect, and decided to let him go. He helped the elder stand up, brushed off his clothes, and cut off the elder's flexicuffs. He then picked the elder's belongings up off the ground and put them back into his pocket. He walked the elder to the edge of the crowd and said, 'You're free to go, Uncle.' The elder was very grateful. He kissed the

security force officer on his cheeks and shook hands with him. The crowd immediately applauded.

The above example also reveals that even 'curious' bystanders, who are sometimes dismissed as nonplayers, serve a function in the crowd. Crowds of bystanders have a monitoring function, observing the events and determining whether people are enacting culturally appropriate social positions, or whether social relations are out of sync with cultural norms, such as dishonorable treatment of elders.

Consistent with considerations of honor in social identities, the findings suggested that Middle Easterners tend to exhibit a relatively high degree of risk-tolerance for physical harm in crowd situations, as shown in the following incident involving a Lebanese demonstrator:

> They're bombing the roads to keep people from going back and forth to the palace to protest. We would hide when the bombing started, and when they stopped, we would go back down. It was like this. We were crazy then. We were young, but it was really everybody who would do this, young people, old people; it was everybody. Just after bombarding, we were few, but after some hours, it was normal size again. Our people are like this; they are crazy. Not just for the demonstrations, but for other things too. For example, several times we went to the beach, and they started to bombard us. Okay, home … we go home, and when everything is calm, we go back.

This example demonstrates a shared tolerance for risk that far outstrips the comfort levels of most Americans. Similarly, extremely high risk tolerance and commitment in protestors was reported by a Lebanese Army officer who was appointed to security detail during protests against Syria following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri:

> The demonstrators included men, women, and children from all religious groups. The people were angry, and wanted to vent their anger in public. They were not dangerous – he did not see any sticks, arms, stone throwing, or anything. He had arranged his soldiers behind concertina wire, with an officer on a pile of stones with a bullhorn. The officer was in charge of talking to the crowd. His job was to calm them down, and repeat that they were not allowed to come in. The crowd reaction was shouting slogans, walking over the concertina wire, and pushing the soldiers. He saw women and children walking over two layers of concertina wire. He saw that as an indication of the strength of their determination. He felt that attempting to block them completely at that point would end in disaster, so he let a few enter the area, a little at a time.

In another example, a security team did not operate with such restraint, and it did lead to disaster. The following incident occurred in Iraq, 2004, involving a deadly violent reaction to aggression by a security team:

> A protest was planned to occur in Hit, led by a former sheik. The plan was to gather people in Baghdadi and then march to Hit. They were protesting to have the roads to Fallujah opened. The roads were closed at the time to prevent weapons smuggling. The crowd of about 2000 people began the march. Some insurgents, or civilians dressed as insurgents, joined the crowd. They wore RPGs and hoods, but later the investigators found out that the RPGs were fake. The crowd was peaceful at first. The police walked with them. There were four 'insurgents' in the front. A sheik was leading the march and there were sheiks dispersed throughout the crowd who were trying to keep things peaceful. An oil man and his security contractors left the base in three cars around this time, coincidentally. They drove down the road, saw the crowd, apparently panicked and did a herringbone on the road. The cars turn around to leave, but no one noticed that the

lead car was stuck in a ditch with three of the security contractors. One of the contractors got out of the car and shot one of the lead 'insurgents.' At that point, the crowd erupted. The crowd killed the contractor and wounded another one (they thought they had killed him). They let the third member of the security team (an Iraqi) leave. The mob tore the car apart.

Another common theme that emerged from the interviews related to the connection between social identity and honor was the use of language to highlight in-group/out-group differences between the crowd members and security forces. This kind of communicative act reflected attempts to influence the models of social identity and corresponding relevant actions held by sub-groups. Unfriendly crowd leaders attempted to engender hostile emotional reactions among their fellows by proposing images of polar opposition between security forces and the crowds. In the following example of crowd member attempts to polarize, the security forces explicitly tried to focus on commonalities, and were able to provide some concrete demonstrations to back them up:

> The protestors would call out arguments that created a distance between themselves and the security forces. For example, the crowd members argued that they were Muslims, and the security forces were Christians. They also brought Israel into the picture, suggesting that the security forces were working on behalf of the Israelis. The security forces attempted to talk to the crowd in ways that would calm them down and find commonalities between them. They would say things like, 'Calm down,' 'we are not the enemy,' 'we're just doing our jobs here – have to clear the area.' They also had some Muslims in their ranks who stepped forward to directly counter the argument about religion. By pointing out the commonalities, they were able to defuse the situation.

In another example, an Egyptian interviewee described a time when his family visited Cairo, and was caught up in massive, violent demonstrations in 1981. Here, monitoring and arguments by fellow crowd members about appropriate social roles and positions did not have any apparent calming effect:

> They took to the streets and they expressed their anger and dissatisfaction with the government for the prices going up. We parked our car and followed behind the main crowd. There were a lot of people, and many were watching from the sides. We were not familiar with the area. It was like a scene that nobody would miss. You go and it's exciting. They were throwing rocks and what not, as they walked down the street. We saw a lot of cars damaged. Hundreds of cars. See they attacked every car that had like a police officer in it or someone in uniform. My mom and my sister were very, very upset with the crowd and what they did. They said, 'These people could be our children so why are you doing this?' If you have a message you have to say or do it peacefully not through violent demonstrations. I didn't talk. Some others were saying things like, 'yes, it's about time,' things like that. Others of them would say, 'no, no, no this is wrong! Why do they do this?' It was kind of like a debate between the crowd, I mean between the onlookers if you will. Some supported what was going on, and some argued against it.

Quantitative analysis and results

In addition to the qualitative thematic analysis described above, we conducted a quantitative analysis to test more directly the specific hypothesis concerning opposition to aggression. Specifically, we hypothesize that, in cases where Middle Eastern crowd members construe security force actions as affronts to their honor, they are likely to sanction resistance against even a heavily armed security force. On the other hand, if

Table 1. Crowd change points by security force actions.

	Increased conflict	Decreased conflict
Force escalation	16	10
Understanding, restraint	9	22

the members of the security force act in ways that preserve the honor of crowd members, crowd tensions are more likely to be defused.

In order to conduct the quantitative analysis, the 36 crowd incidents were coded for causal linkages between change points in the crowd and various precipitating events. Segments of the incidents were coded as causal linkages if they met the following two criteria. First, the causal linkage had to consist of two parts, a situational event or cue (e.g. crowd member threw a rock, security forces arrived on the scene, etc.) followed by a resulting change point in crowd behavior or crowd demeanor (e.g. crowd members grew angrier, crowd members drew closer to the security forces, crowd became louder). Second, the causal relationship between the two parts had to be apparent either by proximity in the incident (the events obviously followed each other sequentially in the narrative) or by the presence of transitional phrases (e.g. because, so, then, as a result). In all, 136 triggers and 157 crowd changes were identified. Specific triggers could not be identified for 21 of the crowd changes. The data were then further reduced to include only the security force triggering events, coded as those that would be construed by crowd members as challenges to honor by escalation of force, and those that would be construed as preserving honor by generating understanding or exhibiting restraint. Also, crowd change points were classified in terms of whether they signified an increase or decrease in the overall level of conflict. The original coding was conducted by two raters who worked collaboratively and decided codes by consensus. Another rater coded the final events independently to assess reliability. The percentage agreement between for security forces triggers was 94%, and agreement was 96% for crowd reactions.

A cross-tabulation of these results is displayed in Table 1. As can be seen, escalation of force against the crowd led to an increase in the level of conflict more often than not (62%), whereas attempting to understand the crowd or exhibiting restraint was much less likely to lead to an increase in conflict (29%). The association between the kind of security force actions and crowd change points was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 8.57$, $p = 0.003$.

Summary

In Study 1, we elicited experiences involving crowds in the Middle East, and analyzed themes across the incidents. Interpretations of the data were guided by a version of the Social Identity Model, extended to account for considerations of honor. We found support for core model assumptions, such as rational, goal-driven crowd member decisions, increased self-efficacy following crowd participation, and specific links between culturally defined social relations and actions. Elements of honor as reflected in the social identities were found as well. We further examined the concept of honor as providing an important basis for potential conflict, as well as conflict resolution between security forces and crowd members that may be pertinent to understanding

crowd violence in the Middle East. The findings suggest that violent crowd reactions are especially likely to occur when crowd members construe security force actions as affronts to their honor. However, if the members of the security force act in ways that preserve the honor of crowd members, crowd tensions are more likely to be defused.

The results from Study 1 provided encouraging support for assumptions of a version of the Social Identity Model that takes into account considerations of honor. Yet, the extent to which honor factors into Middle Eastern crowd member decisions remains somewhat ambiguous, given that the study was conducted with a single culture. A more controlled, cross-cultural comparison would be helpful in further delineating the effects of honor. Study 2 provides such a comparison by drawing on the implication from Study 1 that crowd member action depends on how the relevant social identities are construed.

Study 2: expected crowd reactions in the Middle East

The purpose of Study 2 was to determine whether and in what ways Middle Eastern civilians and US military personnel arrive at different understandings of Middle Eastern crowd behavior. The general idea follows from a conception of culture as a shared symbolic meaning system, which implies that an important aim of cultural research is to understand the point of view of members of the culture (Rohner, 1984; Sieck, 2011). In the present case of crowds in the Middle East, the idea is to understand the causal maps people use to interpret specific situations and formulate expectations about how events will unfold. In particular, if Middle Easterners have a greater tendency to frame social events in terms of honor and respect than the Americans, then they would be more likely to form expectations that Arab crowd participants would respond positively to signs of respect on the one hand, and also that they would be more likely to anticipate a hostile backlash by crowd members in response to escalation by members of the security forces.

In order to conduct the study, we adapted an approach that has been employed by cognitive anthropologists and cognitive psychologists to study causal beliefs in a variety of settings, such as those related to disease onset and treatment, and influences of rainforest plants and animals on each other, among others (Atran, Medin, & Ross, 2005; Garro, 2000). For example, in a study examining the cultural knowledge and understandings relating to diabetes causation in a Native American community, participants were asked to describe possible causes, effects and ways of dealing with diabetes (Garro, 2000). In Study 2, we used a similar approach, but with an emphasis on understanding how people with different cultural backgrounds interpret social situations, including their expected reactions to various kinds of behavior. Specifically, we examined causal beliefs concerning crowd reactions to various possible security force actions, as well as more general beliefs concerning appropriate roles and goals of security forces in specific crowd situations in the Middle East. Participants read a brief vignette describing a crowd event (based on an actual incident collected in Study 1). After reading the scenario, the participants were interviewed to elicit their beliefs about the roles of each group, and expectations about security force actions and crowd member behavior. Interview topics included their perceptions of the purpose of the crowd, security force actions and goals, crowd member actions and goals, and actions that would calm or inflame the crowd. A questionnaire was also administered

in which participants indicated their expectations regarding crowd member responses to various security force actions.

Method

Participants

Thirty people participated in Study 2. There were two categories of participants: US soldiers who participated in a training exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Ft Polk, LA, USA ($n = 14$); and Middle Eastern ex-patriot civilians living in Dearborn, MI, USA ($n = 16$). The Middle Eastern civilians were identified by professional recruiters who engaged local community centers, social networks and existing panels. Selection criteria were that interviewees had to have been born and raised in the Middle East, have participated in at least one demonstration in the region and be at least 18 years of age. Most of these participants were from Iraq (62%) and Lebanon (30%), with the remainder from Syria and Saudi Arabia. The soldiers in Study 2 were identified through their participation in the training exercise, and unlike the military participants in Study 1, did not have extensive field experience or special Middle Eastern cultural knowledge. Study 2 data collection was conducted in the summer of 2007.

Interview guide

Structured scenario-based interviews were conducted for Study 2. At the beginning of each interview, participants read a brief scenario describing a crowd event that occurred in the Middle East, and then they were asked specific questions about their expectations for security force and crowd member actions and goals. Two different scenarios were used in this study, 'Tires on Fire' and 'Bank Robbery' (see below). Both of these scenarios were based on real-world incidents collected in Study 1, and they were tailored to be appropriate for the relevant participant population. The US military versions are shown below:

Tires on fire
You are the commander of a peacekeeping force in a large city of a Middle Eastern country. You've just gotten word that there is a protest taking place several blocks from where you are. When you arrive on the scene, you see that there are approximately 20 men in the street burning a pile of tires. Most of the men are relatively young – in their mid-20s to mid-30s. They are yelling and throwing more tires on the fire. You can't make out what they are yelling, but they appear angry. There are hundreds of other people lining the streets watching – men and women of all ages, and children. Some are yelling, some are cheering, and some are just observing and talking with those around them. You also notice there are several people observing from the balconies of their homes overlooking the street. They appear more curious than frightened.

Bank robbery
You are on patrol through the streets of a small city in a Middle Eastern country. You've just received word via radio that there's a bank robbery taking place a few blocks from your current location. When you arrive on the scene, you enter the bank and find a group of people including some middle-aged men and women, and an elderly man, in the process of a robbery. Upon showing your weapons, the robbers surrender, and you begin to remove the men from the bank one-by-one, flexicuff them, and place them on the sidewalk face-down. With each robber you bring out, you notice a crowd of onlookers growing outside the bank. At first the crowd appears relatively small, quiet, and curious. Yet it becomes larger and more vocal as you continue to bring out the robbers …

particularly when you bring out the women and the elderly man. By the time you've brought out all the prisoners, there are several crowd members flailing their arms and yelling. But you can't make out what they're saying.

After reading a scenario, participants were asked questions about their perceptions of the security force actions and goals, crowd member actions and goals, and actions that would calm or inflame the crowd. The purpose of these questions was to elicit the participants' expectations about the causal linkages between security force actions and crowd member behavior. The interview guides varied slightly for military and civilian interviews. Once the scenario-based interviews were completed, participants responded to a questionnaire about causal linkages. The structured interview guide was constructed by reviewing the incidents from Study 1 to identify specific security force actions and crowd member responses. This initial list of security force actions was reduced to the following 12 actions:

- negotiate with crowd leaders;
- entertain crowd members;
- remove helmets and armor;
- speak some amount of arabic;
- answers their questions;
- stand by and monitor the crowd;
- yell at the crowd members;
- fire a warning shot;
- strike a member of the crowd with a blunt weapon;
- push the crowd members back;
- create a barrier or a blockade;
- remove certain crowd members from the scene.

Five types of crowd member responses were also included:

- crowd dispersal or advancement;
- changes in the level of crowd member violent actions;
- changes in the level of crowd member agitation;
- changes in crowd member attitudes towards the United States;
- changes in the level of destruction.

Each security force action was paired once with each crowd member response. For each pair, the participant was asked whether the crowd member behavior or attitude will increase, decrease or stay the same. Two example questions are:

- If US security forces strike a member of the crowd with a blunt weapon, are the other crowd members more likely to

  (a) increase their level of violence;
  (b) decrease their level of violence;
  (c) maintain the same level of violence.

- If US security forces speak some Arabic to the crowd members, are they more likely to

(a) have favorable attitudes towards the United States;
(b) have unfavorable attitudes towards the United States;
(c) have neutral attitudes towards the United States.

Procedure

The US military participants were interviewed during a break in a training exercise being held at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Ft Polk, LA, USA. The Middle Eastern civilian participants were interviewed individually in a focus group facility in Dearborn, MI, USA. The structured interviews lasted for approximately 1 hour.

Analysis and results

Scenario interview

We concentrated analysis on security force goals and actions, and crowd responses to those actions to identify differences between US security forces and Middle Eastern crowd participants. We focused on these areas as they were most relevant to our hypotheses concerning the effects of the value of honor on causal beliefs. Also, note that the first category pertains to simple first-order beliefs, whereas the second category explicitly addresses beliefs about a particular causal relationship (i.e. actions → inflammation). We analyzed the interviews in several phases, moving from a very qualitative examination of the data that preserved the individual structure of each participant's utterances to an increasingly quantitative characterization of the data. The phases of analysis were as follows:

1. We reviewed each interview in depth and created a graphical representation of each interviewee's causal belief structures in a format that preserved their own language and ideas.
2. We abstracted a common set of categories to capture the ideas across individuals. We used the complete set of categories to develop a single graphical framework to represent the causal belief structures.
3. Each of the interviews was coded in terms of the common categories using the graphical framework to represent their causal beliefs.

The descriptions of security force goals and actions were especially rich and complex, and we wanted to ensure adequate inter-rater reliability. Hence, we employed multidimensional scaling methods to the set of descriptions so as to reduce the complexity in a meaningful way for the quantitative analyses. In particular, we first reduced each relevant statement to a several-word phrase (e.g. stop people from getting hurt). Many of these naturally mapped onto the same descriptors (e.g. stop tire burning, end tire burning in a safe way), but others differed from one another to a greater or lesser extent. Doing this produced a total of 46 unique phrases to categorize. We then wrote each phrase on a separate slip of paper, and gave the slips to four independent raters with familiarity with the topic area. Raters were instructed to sort these slips into categories of descriptors that had the same or highly similar meanings. Based on these groupings, we computed a similarity matrix for the descriptors that described how many raters placed each pair of descriptors in the same category. We then performed a hierarchical clustering analysis to determine whether or not the two

descriptors tended to be placed in the same category across raters. The final set of categories resulting from this analysis is presented in Table 2.

US security force (US SF) and Middle Eastern crowd participants (ME CP) differed in their expectation of security force goals in some interesting ways (see Figure 1). For US security forces, 25% of their expected goals and actions focused on controlling the situation and securing the safety of the US security forces. They would accomplish these goals by keeping the crowd at a distance or dispersing them, and enlisting the help of the local police so the security force can leave the scene. Next, US security force goals and actions had to do with crowd emotion (15%) and keeping the crowds calm. In contrast, Middle Eastern crowd participants expected the security force to focus on crowd safety (20%), and increasing understanding of why the crowd was forming (14%).

In addition to the differences in goals, we also found differences in causal beliefs about the actions that might backfire and unintentionally inflame the crowd. Figure 2 clearly shows that US security forces and Middle Eastern crowd participants have different ideas regarding actions that can unintentionally inflame a crowd. US security forces are worried about communicating with the crowd in a way that would inflame them (56%), such as drawing attention by using an interpreter to ask questions, not answering a question or comment, or having a translator make a command. In contrast, Middle Eastern crowd participants were most worried about escalation of physical force

Table 2. Categories of security force goals/actions resulting from multidimensional scaling methods analysis.

| Category number	Category name	Specific security force goals/actions
1	Remove instigators	Stop tire burning; end tire burning in a safe way; protect bank; deal with robbers; remove robbers
2	Increase understanding of situation	Talk to families; understand why gathering; understand culture
3	Secure situations/forces	Secure location; control situation; control own forces; keep crowd at a distance; punish them; security of forces; leave the scene; do not get separated; get Iraqi police involved; disperse crowd
4	Improve long-term attitudes	Peace in area; prevent negative attitudes; do not increase anti-United States attitudes; help population; maintain credibility
5	Protect safety of crowd	Safety; keep onlookers safe; protect women and children; keep everyone safe; stop people from getting hurt
6	Manage crowd emotion	Keep crowd calm; calm crowd; do not get crowd angry
7	Diffuse tension	Minimize threat; reduce destruction; no hostility; diffuse tension; maintain peace
8	Reduce violence	Reduce violence; decrease violence; quell violence; prevent violence
9	Prevent escalation	Prevent joining; keep mob from forming; prevent escalation; no escalation; avoid escalation; prevent riot
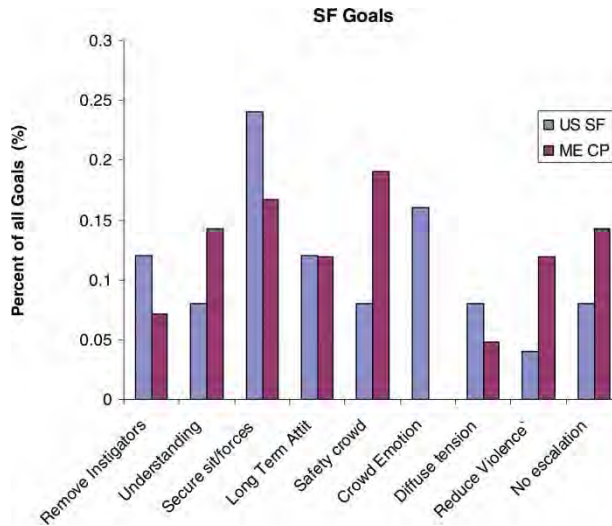
Figure 1.   US Security Force (US SF) and Middle Eastern crowd participant (ME CP) expectations about security force goals.
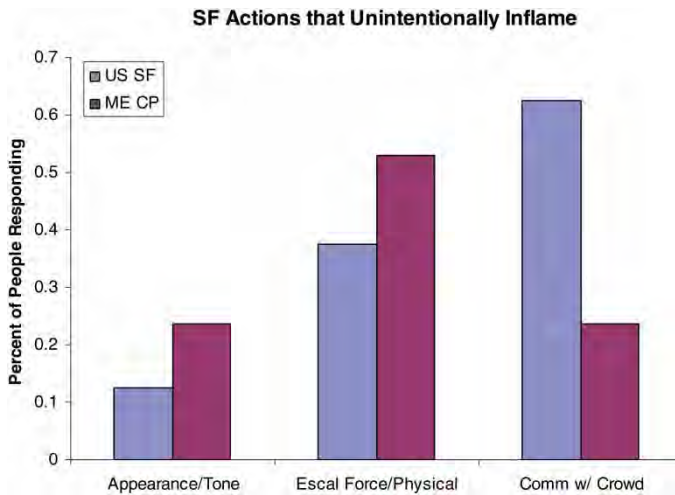

Figure 2.   US Security Force (US SF) and Middle Eastern crowd participant (ME CP) expectations about security force actions that unintentionally inflame crowds.

inflaming the crowd (52%), such as hitting innocent people, pushing crowd members or firing a warning shot.

Questionnaire

In order to analyze expectations based on the questionnaire responses, we first calculated (for each participant) the proportion of times the participant reported an expected

increase or decrease in conflict, given that security personnel engaged in force escalation behaviors or behaviors signifying understanding and restraint. We then used *t*-tests to compare each of these subject-level measures between the Middle Easterners and Americans. Middle Eastern participants were more likely, on average, to expect decreases in conflict following behaviors signifying understanding or restraint than the American participants, $t(28) = 2.54$, $p < 0.05$ ($M_1 = 0.56$; $M_2 = 0.38$, respectively). No other effects were significant. In particular, expectations for increases in conflict following force escalation did not differ significantly, with both groups tending to expect such increases ($M_1 = 0.54$; $M_2 = 0.60$, respectively).

As described earlier, Study 2 was motivated in part by a conception of culture as comprising shared meanings. From this perspective, it is useful to consider analyses that can inform us directly about various clusters of shared meaning that exist within the data, enabling us to examine 'cultures' directly, rather than relying on demographics as a proxy for culture. Hence, we employed a statistical technique called 'finite mixture modeling' to further analyze the questionnaire data (McLachlan & Peel, 2000). Finite mixture modeling is an approach that permits direct segmentation of cultural groups based on clusters of consensus (Mueller & Veinott, 2008; Sieck & Mueller, 2009; Sieck, Rasmussen, & Smart, 2010). Mixture models have been applied in many scientific fields. In cultural modeling applications, the distinct segments resulting from the analysis represent *cultural groups*, i.e. groups defined by the similarity of their ideas, and hence the technique has sometimes been referred to as 'cultural mixture modeling' in this application area.

Cultural mixture modeling begins by defining a statistical likelihood model (i.e. a generative model) by which we assume data and errors arise. It then asks the question, 'How many groups of people with shared beliefs generated the observed data'. Along with the ability to test whether a consensus exists among a set of respondents, the procedure can also determine if multiple shared beliefs exist, and identify the different groups or clusters of respondents.

We investigated two distinct models for this analysis: a binomial model and a strong agreement model. The binomial model used one parameter to account for each response, which was the place value of a binomial distribution with $N = 2$. The strong consensus model simply assumed that the 'correct' response was given with $p = 1 - 2\alpha$, and each of the incorrect responses was given with $p = \alpha$. By applying cultural mixture modeling, the binomial response model determined that there was a consensus among the different groups of respondents ($-\text{BIC} = 5588$). For all numbers of groups investigated, the solution defaulted to a single group containing 30 respondents and the remaining groups were empty. This was achieved because the binomial response model is quite forgiving and able to account for fairly wide variability among respondents. We applied the strong consensus model with three values of α. In contrast, the strong consensus model found no consensus in any of the conditions, with the number of obtained groups varying from 10 (for $\alpha = 0.01$, $-\text{BIC} = 6373$) to 5 (for $\alpha = 0.05$; $-\text{BIC} = 4901$) to 3 (for $\alpha = 0.1$, $-\text{BIC} = 4331$). Across the set of models, the smallest BIC value was obtained for the weakest strong consensus model ($\alpha = 0.1$) for three groups (see Figure 3). Each group represents a set of consensus beliefs that is distinct from the other two groups. Hence, we refer to these emergent groups from the analysis as cultural groups.

Table 3 shows how the US security force and Middle Eastern civilian populations are distributed among the three cultural groups. Table 3 implies that there is a partial consensus in causal beliefs about security force interactions with crowds that includes
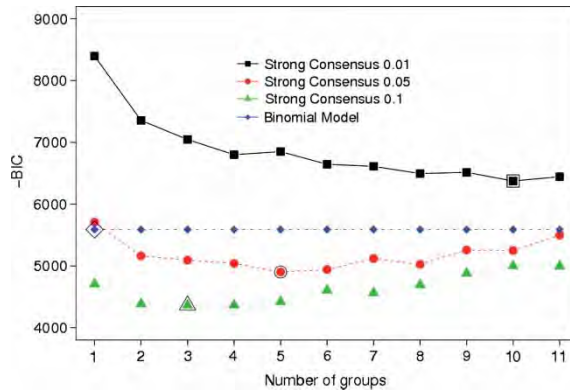
Figure 3.   Fit and number of groups from cultural mixture modeling.

Table 3.   Distribution of country of origin across three groups.

	US security force	Middle Eastern civilian
A	8	7
B	3	6
C	5	1

both US security force and Middle Eastern crowd members (about 50% of the members of each population). The remaining members of the populations appear to form two 'splinter' groups that are formed primarily of Middle Eastern or US participants, and that hold ideas that diverge from the overall consensus.

With the cultural groups identified, the next step in the analysis was to characterize the consensual beliefs for each group, and to examine the differences between them. A summary of the strong consensual beliefs for each group is presented in Table 4. As shown, the members of the 'mixed consensus' group believe that striking crowd members will most likely result in increased violence, destruction and agitation (VDA), whereas communication in various forms is likely to decrease VDA or increase positive attitudes towards the United States. The primary difference between the 'Middle Eastern splinter' group is the inclusion of a slightly broader set of escalated force actions as likely to increase VDA, and the shared belief that more of the forms of communication will lead to a reduction in VDA. More strikingly different is the 'US splinter' group, who share beliefs that communicating with the crowd in various ways is unlikely to have beneficial effects, either in reducing VDA or in generating positive attitudes towards the United States. In general, this group appears to hold fairly pessimistic beliefs about successfully managing crowds; they tend to see actions as increasing VDA, decreasing positive attitudes or having no effect on the situation.

Summary

The purpose of Study 2 was to identify differences between American security force members and Middle Eastern crowd participants with respect to how they interpret

Table 4. Strong consensual beliefs for each cultural group.

Group	Dominant population	Increase violence/ destruction/agitation (V/D/A)	Decrease V/D/A	No effect on V/D/A	Increase positive attitude towards United States	Decrease positive attitude towards United States	No effect on attitudes
A	Mixed	Strike	Answer questions	Remove CM	Speak Arabic Negotiate	Warning shots	
B	Middle Eastern	Strike Yell Remove CM	Speak Arabic Negotiate Answer questions Entertain	Remove helmet Stand by			
C	US	Remove helmet Push Yell Barriers		Warning shots Entertain Negotiate		Warning shots Barriers Yell Push Strike	Speak Arabic Answer questions

Note: CM - crowd member

crowd situations. The scenario interview portion of Study 2 indicated several differences in beliefs about security force goals, and security force actions that would inflame the situation. Specifically, the Americans tended to believe that security force goals should be to control the situation and disperse the crowd, whereas the Middle Eastern crowd participants expected that primary security force goals should be to keep the crowd safe. Also, the Americans tended to expect that communication with the crowd would be most likely to lead to unintentional violent responses, whereas the Middle Easterners tended to expect that force escalation would be the most likely unintentional cause of hostile crowd responses. In Study 2, we also used mixture modeling to quantitatively assess American and Middle Eastern causal beliefs as reported in a questionnaire. Consistent with the scenario interviews, the results revealed important differences in how American security force and Middle Eastern crowd members understand crowd situations. A primary point of divergence is in US and Middle Eastern understanding of the effects of communicating with the crowd. In particular, there was a consensus among Middle Easterners that US security force communication with crowd members is beneficial, whereas the Americans tended not to expect useful effects from attempts to communicate with Middle Eastern crowd members.

Discussion

In this paper, we examined the Social Identity Model of crowd behavior, as compared with notions of de-individuation and 'mindless violence', and showed that it can be usefully extended to apply to Middle Eastern crowds (Reicher, 1996). In the past, it has only been applied in cases where all actors originate from a single Western culture. Here, we elaborated the model to account for the role of honor in social identities and relations, and examined the correspondence between key assumptions of the elaborated model and experiences from Middle Eastern crowds.

The Social Identity Model assumes that crowd participants are rational decision-makers focused on shared goals who consider actions as possible and legitimate based in large part on their perceived position in a set of social relations. Honor represents a shared value that accompanies tangible goals, and tends to weigh heavily in those decision processes. At the group level, accomplishment of crowd goals leads to increased self-efficacy among crowd members that is closely associated with gains in group honor. At the individual level, honor involves the assertion of one's public image, and that image becomes highly accentuated among the in-group of fellow crowd members. Hence, crowd membership affords an important opportunity to prove oneself and accrue honor, particularly in cases involving social relations that are construed as hostile between in-group crowd members and security forces. Further, the degree of honor gained increases with the extent of risk to physical safety, such as by crowd members aggressively confronting heavily armed security who take an adversarial position. Finally, rational assessment combined with the value of honor implies that direct displays of respect towards crowd members can reduce tension and prevent violence. In such situations, crowd members are provided with the opportunity to gain honor without having to trade-off risk.

Study 1 drew on actual experiences of crowd members in the Middle East to test assumptions of the elaborated model. The results showed that Middle Eastern crowd members made rational assessments, exhibited goal-directed behavior and were willing to accept considerable risk to achieve goals shared by the crowd. Experiences

also indicated increased self-efficacy after accomplishing crowd goals. The results revealed important linkages between peoples' dynamic models of social relations and ensuing permissible actions in the crowd context. For example, we found that Middle East crowd members and security forces actively discussed and debated the nature of their social positions and relations, and relied on the resulting construals to define appropriate actions. Finally, quantitative coding of crowd reactions to security force actions showed that escalation of force against crowds led to an increase in the level of conflict more often than not, whereas attempts to understand and communicate with crowds or exhibit restraint tended to decrease conflict.

Study 2 compared reactions with crowd scenarios cross-culturally to test the hypothesis that Middle Easterners tend to interpret crowd events in a manner consistent with honor considerations. The results showed that American soldiers and Middle Eastern civilians hold differing beliefs and expectations about social roles and crowd reactions to security force actions. The American soldiers reported that the aim of security forces would be to establish control over the situation, a stance that does not reflect sensitivity to honor and that would probably lead to acts that tend to diminish it. Middle Eastern civilians instead expected security forces to focus on crowd safety, which would not clash with honor considerations. In addition, Middle Eastern crowd participants felt that security force communication with crowd members would reduce violence and aggression. In contrast, the American soldiers felt that attempting to communicate with the crowd could unintentionally inflame them, and was unlikely to reduce violence and destruction. However, both groups did tend to expect some level of violent responses to force escalation. Overall, the Middle Eastern civilian expectations were congruent with considerations of honor, as well as with the patterns of actual experience reported in Study 1. American expectations diverged in ways suggesting interpretations based on a different frame of reference.

The results from Study 2 also have implications for the conduct of crowd management in peacekeeping and stability operations. As a number of authors have suggested, an important objective in such cases is to gain the support of the populace, as well as to ensure that civilians feel like they have a stake in the success of free, stable governments (Kilcullen, 2009). Crowd participation can provide an opportunity for civilians to develop a collective sense of efficacy, as well as confidence in authorities who support their efforts to be heard. Providing appropriate support is nontrivial, however, and includes special challenges when security forces represent international coalitions. Specifically, an implication of the present research is that crowd member action depends on how the relevant social identities are construed by themselves as well as by security forces. Knowing this can be especially difficult if the crowd members and security personnel come from different cultural backgrounds, such as in international peacekeeping situations. In order to understand the behavior of crowd members, one must first be able to see the situation as the crowd members do (Sieck, Grome, Smith, & Rababy, 2010). The difficulty is that a person's construal of a social situation and resulting expectations depend on culture-specific beliefs and knowledge. The identification of potential differences in interpretations that could lead to conflicts in intensive intercultural crowd situations, such as described in Study 2, provides a basis for educating international security forces on how to more effectively support public collective action.

For such applications to be truly effective, a better understanding is required of the extent to which the key pattern of effects should be expected to generalize. Results from Study 2 suggest that the pattern would not be culturally universal. For example, it may

be that groups of protestors in the West tend to be more ideologically driven than honor-focused, as well as guided by more well-defined and rehearsed action scripts that are less sensitive to honor affronts or appeasements. If so, we would expect to find that crowd reactions depend less on security force actions in Western countries than in the Middle East. Clearly, such speculation requires empirical testing. Another question related to the generality issue that deserves further exploration pertains to other contextual factors that moderate crowd reactions to security force actions, whether in the Middle East or other regions. In Study 1, for example, there were cases where escalation of force reduced conflict and vice versa. Do such cases simply attest to an inherent level of unpredictability in human behavior, or are other aspects of the context at work, as well? A related issue is that there are likely to be differences regarding the role of honor in crowd behavior depending on the local cultures or segments of society that exist within broader regional cultures. In order to understand locations where honor may or may not play a significant role, it is useful to consider a recent theory concerning the origins of cultures of honor (Henry, 2009). Henry investigated status as a key mediator linking cultures of honor to herding subsistence patterns, which have been previously associated with honor (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Specifically, Henry found that herding societies tend to be associated with relatively large and fluctuating status disparities, as well as the low-status members of an area being especially at risk of stigma. Low-status people in such areas thus become especially vigilant in psychological self-protection as a way of compensating for their low status, and are especially willing to react violently to threats to their self-esteem. If this account is essentially correct, we expect the level of status disparity in geographic areas to indicate the likely importance of local cultures of honor, and the extent of honor-effects on crowd behavior to vary with the local degree of status disparity. Again, this presents an area for further investigation and empirical testing.

Perhaps the most important findings of the current study are the results indicating that direct displays of respect can reduce conflict in Middle Eastern crowd situations. According to the theory, such displays enable rational crowd members to accrue honor while avoiding risks associated with violent confrontation. The idea that interpersonal violence might be defused by imparting intangible values of respect, worth and dignity has been explored in broader contexts (Henry, 2009; Kelman, 2007). In addition to the supporting incidents and other findings reported here, it is also useful to consider contemporary events that point towards the same conclusion. The popular uprisings that have been spreading across the Middle East during the writing of this article yield many illustrations of reduced tensions following signs of mutual respect, as well as violent confrontation in response to attempted suppression (Fahim & Stack, 2011; Kulish & Mekhennet, 2011). The Egyptian protests, for example, are remarkable in remaining fairly peaceful, relative to the sheer size, magnitude of the goals, and intensity of commitment displayed to those goals on all sides.[2] The findings of the current study indicate that respectful, affirming gestures between protestors and soldiers, such as giving flowers, sharing water and taking pictures, were extremely important in fostering (relatively) peaceful protests. Such small moments occurred several times in between fighting early on, even before the largest affirmation on the part of the military, in their declaration that the protestors had a right to peaceful, free expression (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

In the Egyptian case, the protests ultimately resulted in regime change and the detainment of the former leader, Mr Mubarak, giving some other governments in the

region considerable incentive to violently repress the popular uprisings they are facing (Slackman & El-Naggar, 2011). At the moment, it remains unclear as to how such tactics will play out in individual countries. The studies reported here suggest the value of an alternative approach for the long term, however. The current findings have served to validate the application and elaboration of the Social Identity Model of crowd behavior to Middle Eastern populations. The model implies that successful crowd participation gives rise to an increased sense of self-efficacy that persists beyond the specific event. Supporting the right to organize and participate in peaceful demonstrations and protests, along with ensuring that security members proactively treat crowd members with respect, is thereby expected to reduce the chance and magnitude of violence over the long term, as well as in the immediate moment. Such a strategy increases stability by enabling more frequent, lower-intensity collective actions to provide some measured level of reform to moderate governments, rather than resisting the public voice until rare, yet devastating, revolutionary strife ensues with far more drastic consequences.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. A study of Afghan values attests to some of the complexities inherent in the concept and in its associated effects on decision-making (Sieck, Javidan, Osland, & Rasmussen, 2011). Although honor was found to be a fundamental Afghan value with widespread importance, there were subtle differences in interpretation of honor between groups within Afghanistan. Furthermore, honor was sometimes 'trumped' by other values in specific contexts, especially by the second most important reported value of status. The semantic relationships between honor and other values were found to be quite complex.
2. The many political intricacies influencing these demonstrations are beyond the scope of the current paper.

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