Main Cases in The Honor Code (and Mackie’s suggestions)

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<th>Maintenance</th>
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<td>Repute for military courage among warrior nobility (GM)? Feudal</td>
<td>Courage of individual gentlemen as conventionalized in duelling codes. 15th - 19th centuries</td>
<td>Changed dimension of honor (KAA). Weakening of honor group (KAA).</td>
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<td><strong>Honor killing</strong></td>
<td>Male repute for military courage (generosity, etc.), female repute for chastity and obedience. Conditions: wide resource variability; weak or no state; corporate competition (GM).</td>
<td>Zero-sum competition between groups. Like FGC can persist as convention after originating conditions vanish (GM).</td>
<td>Proposed (KAA): Outsider-insider collective shaming. Changed dimension of honor. National honor.</td>
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*A family at the margin could footbind one daughter and render her marriageable, and not footbind another, without the footbound daughter being contaminated by her unbound sister. In contrast, under the honor and modesty code, one offending female contaminates the remainder of the group’s females.*
**Importance of The Honor Code**

- Study of moral evolution and moral revolution, neglected in social theory.
- Insightful hypotheses about the place of honor in moral revolutions.
- Standard response in political theory to righting moral wrongs is merely to prescribe legal prohibition, but for many issues legal prohibition doesn’t make things better and sometimes make things worse. We need many more tools and we need to use the right tools for the job.
- More generally, it’s a good thing to develop and apply philosophical moral psychology and sociology and empirical moral psychology and sociology to understanding and helping to change harmful social practices. We need another 50 books like this.

**Causality of Honor**

Honor is anything having to do with rankings of inequality and equality along some dimension of worth (see Appendix: Unifying Vertical and Horizontal Honor). It can take a wide variety of forms. Additionally, there are many other moral and social motivations, either inflecting honor or entirely independent of it.

References to honor will sometimes be associated with the origin, maintenance, or demise of a social practice. However, the best explanation may depend on factors in addition to honor, or instead of honor.

For example, with respect to the demise of a practice, an honor element could

- Have no effect
- Be one contributory factor, but not necessary
- Be one necessary factor
- Be a necessary and sufficient factor

**Dueling.** Necessary factor. From my review of the evidence, I think the argument in THC, that the end of dueling in Great Britain was due to a changed understanding of what courage requires, is strongly supported. As THC observes, democratization of Great Britain was a background condition for this change. William Ian Miller says that the democratizing masses began to return upwards contempt to the elite, cancelling out their downwards contempt, and undercutting their conceits. Dueling was also increasingly rejected by the religious, moral, military, and legal establishments. What kind of courage is it that fears the social sanctions of a few in an honor caste so much as to defy the weighty moral and political judgments of the remainder of society?

**Footbinding.** National honor is contributory but not necessary. Honor-and-modesty of families and daughters preserved by collective abandonment of practice is
necessary and of primary importance. On my account, for China to learn that the rest of the world did not bind feet was a necessary element of change. Since the practice was nearly universal, people did not cognize unbound feet as an alternative; the same was true for female genital cutting in Africa. But this is a different point than national honor and shame. There were many denunciations of footbinding by Christian missionaries throughout the 19th century, and several by leading Chinese, with no effect. Footbinding began to end in 1895 with the first formation of marriage societies for the joint abandonment of footbinding, solving the marriageability problem. The European wing of this movement, led by Mrs. Archibald Little, also replaced Christian arguments against the practice with Confucian arguments. Outsider European-Christian arguments caused reactance. Note: there is a third respectable neoMarxist hypothesis about the end of footbinding: that machine textiles suddenly removed the possibility of footbound women being productive in household silk spinning (the major source of wealth produced by females in traditional China).

Ending of FGC in Africa. In my study of more effective and less effective FGC abandonment programs, I find that negative outsider, or even insider, strategies of collective shaming seem to cause reactance. Programs with a positive and forward-looking content -- one necessary factor among several -- get better results.

Abolition of slavery in Great Britain. Contributory? This was a major moral revolution, contrary to the material interests of its proponents. I am convinced that morality was central to this change. There is a separate historical-sociological question, of why correct moral judgments became popular and effective in this period, but not before; I lack competence to comment further on it. My impression is that although references to honor can be found, there are many more references to a wide range of moral judgments and motivations: justice, mercy, liberty, equality, rights of humanity, charity, benevolence, Christianity, and so on.

Honor killing. Honor necessary to origins and maintenance. As for demise, see below.

Honor and Modesty Code in England, 1813

Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen (thanks to Tim Mulgan!)

Letter from cousin Collins, rejected suitor of Elizabeth Bennet and male heir to the entailed Bennet property, to Mr. Bennet on daughter Lydia Bennet’s elopement with the scoundrel Wickham, who does not plan to marry her!

"My dear Sir.... Be assured...that Mrs. Collins and myself sincerely sympathise with you and all your respectable family, in your present distress, which must be of the bitterest kind, because proceeding from a cause which no time can
The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this. And it is the more to be lamented, because there is reason to suppose, as my dear Charlotte informs me, that this licentiousness of behaviour in your daughter has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence; though, at the same time, for the consolation of yourself and Mrs. Bennet, I am inclined to think that her own disposition must be naturally bad, or she could not be guilty of such an enormity, at so early an age. Howsoever that may be, you are grievously to be pitied; in which opinion I am not only joined by Mrs. Collins, but likewise by Lady Catherine and her daughter, to whom I have related the affair. They agree with me in apprehending that this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others; for who, as Lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family?...Let me advise you then, my dear sir, to console yourself as much as possible, to throw off your unworthy child from your affection for ever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence...

Collins, as Mr. Bennet’s cousin, has a legitimate interest in family honor and modesty. Lydia’s taint is incurable. We would all be better off if she were dead. Mrs. Bennet is at fault (recall that Darcy, in his letter to Elizabeth after her refusal of his first proposal, complained of the “total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly, betrayed by” Mrs. Bennet), and Lydia is doomed by both environment and heredity. Everyone who matters now knows about what Lydia has done (Collins made sure to tell Lady Catherine, who we all know wants her daughter to marry wealthy Darcy, rather than the upstart Elizabeth Bennet who turned Collins down). Lydia contaminates the remaining four Bennet girls (including Elizabeth) whose fortunes are now ruined forever -- what families would contaminate themselves by marrying any of them? Since we cannot kill Lydia, exile is the next best alternative. Note how provoking insults are nested in mock courtesies (same in a Middle Eastern ethnography).

Fadime Sahindal, a Kurd in Sweden, acknowledged that her actions in publicly defying her family made her sisters unmarriageable, they were now considered whores. “I have ruined the lives of all my relatives. To kill me is the only way they can regain their honor, their pride” (Wikan, 54). When Fadime secretly returned for a brief visit from exile in 2002, her father found her and killed her.
Honor and Modesty Code (To Understand is Not to Excuse!)

Generalizations follow, from a telescopic view. There is much variation under the microscopic view, not considered here.

Distribution: Mediterranean, Middle East, Pakistan, North India, Bangladesh, Latin America.

Done among Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs -- motivated by local tradition of honor and modesty rather than by any particular religion.

Honor attaches to individuals, but far more importantly to the group (family, clan, tribe). Honor requires that all be loyal to the group, there is a complete practical dependence on the group for all important resources. There are no social alternatives, a lone individual would fare ill and likely die.

Group (family, clan, tribe) is autonomous and solidarity. No solidarity between unconnected groups in the broader society (except temporarily to oppose outside attack).
Groups in the broader society are roughly equal to one another in honor, with few exceptions. Some groups are dishonored, and are usually poor; in some places those of much larger wealth can be above the concerns of the equal honor groups.

Honor: rivalry, concern for prestige, rank, status. Moral, social, material excellence. The honor of a group is bestowed by the recognition of competing groups.

Note instrumentality of honor values: wealth in number of family members, in number of sons, consequent weight in numbers for military operations; control of land, water, livestock, possessions, money; reproductive worth of daughters; advantageous marriages of sons and daughters, hospitality, promise-keeping (builds alliances); wealth and renown of ancestors, of good blood, biologically innate honor.

Men: Courageous, sensitive to insult, physical strength, military skill, manly, virile; hospitable, generous, promise-keeping; loyalty to group.

Women: Sense of shame; chastity, fidelity, obedience; modesty of dress and behavior; avoidance of males in public, seclusion; loyalty to group.

Honor and modesty take on maximum feasible values. “Thank God, I have many enemies,” said a male Pukhtun of Swat (Horden and Purcell, 509). In Sweden, Sara, 15 years old, was strangled to death and dumped in the snow by her 16-year old brother and 17-year old cousin, for sneaking out of the house to attend Iraqi night at the disco (Wikan, 27).

Honor threatened by outsiders: group or one of its members insulted, subjected to violence or murder, seduction or rape of female member; betrothal to female member is broken. Honor threatened by insiders: by cowardly acts, imprudent belligerence, disloyalty of men; by disobedience, immodesty, disloyalty of women. Any external offense to one in the group, or internal offense by one in the group, is an offense to all. Honor deters such threats, or avenges them rapidly.

Dishonor is purely public; offense is shameful only if known; in some circumstances is tolerated even if widely known so long as no one challenges the group's honor.

“A rumor that you have been seen talking to a boy might be enough. Reputation matters more than truth” (Wikan, 17). It is not that an offense has actually occurred, all that matters is that the public believes there is a chance that an offense has occurred or even could occur.

Why Honor and Modesty Code?

Dependence on Group. The literature always points out that individuals are wholly dependent on the group, that honor attaches to the group, and that an offense to one
or by one is an offense to all in the group. Honor killer: “We don’t think of this as murder...It was like cutting off your finger” (Wikan, 84).

**Group Competition.** The literature often points out that groups are in competition with one another in a broader society, also that groups nevertheless are roughly equal in status.

**Instrumentality of Honor and Modesty.** Honor and modesty are central examples of intrinsic values. Yet, in their origins, these values are motivated by the survival of individuals strongly dependent on a group in harsh competition with other such groups. Locked in place by mutual expectations within an intramarrying society, they can persist for generations after originating conditions have vanished.

**Modesty is the Worth of the Daughter (and Her Female Relatives) on the Broader Society’s Marriage Market.** Not centrally about purity, rather it is about the daughter’s competitive worth on the marriage market: chaste and faithful (even asd divorcee or widow), never raped, obeys birth family, accepts arranged marriage, obeys marriage family, does not seek divorce, does not publicly shame birth or marriage family, loyal to group. Among roughly equal groups in one area, an honor killing “can advance prestige and is like a planned investment in improving, not maintaining, social status” (Kressel 1981, 151).

**Extremism of Honor and Modesty Values.** The literature often points out that honor and modesty take on maximum feasible values, for example, combative sensitivity to even imagined insult by men, killing of a woman for a slight or even false taint to her reputation. This is usually explained as a “symbolization” of the true underlying value.

**Positional Competition; Zero-Sum Game.** Not found in the honor literature. An arms race between competing countries in the international arena is a public good inside each country: all benefit and all should contribute support. It is a positional good between countries: it is not enough to have a good military capacity, a country must have the best military capacity (adapted from Vittiero). Competition between leading countries to be, not good, but best, leads to roughly equal but wastefully large military capacity in each. Positional competition is a zero-sum game: if no countries were to compete then all would be better off through avoiding military expenditure. An example of positional competition among individuals: steroids in American football.

Honor and modesty are like an arms race. They are a public good for all within the group, and in a small group overwhelming positive and negative sanctions motivate each member to uphold a public good. Not to uphold it is betrayal, treason. They are a positional good between groups. Positional competition (not symbolization) drives honor and modesty to maximum feasible values. The results of the competition are roughly equal status among groups, and immediate loss of honor.
for even a minimal decline in the broader society’s estimation of the honor and modesty of one of its groups.

*Speculative Origins Hypotheses.* Conditions of wide resource variability; weak or no state; broader society containing autonomous and fiercely competing groups.

**Honor Killing**

Same distribution, independence from particular religion, as honor and modesty code.

Killing is done by family of birth, not by family of marriage. Decided by narrow birth family, wider birth family, or community authority. Planned and premeditated, not a provoked crime of passion, not due to jealousy.

Killing is done by father, brother, paternal uncle, male cousins of the woman; less often by mothers and sisters; also suicides (and faked suicides). Men who seduced offending woman sometimes killed by woman’s family (Pakistan: one-third of killings are of men, Wikan, 84). Women can kill; and men can be killed.

Killing is exceptional. More common solutions: removing the dishonor by marriage, temporary or permanent exile of offending woman; later marriage out to old or otherwise inferior husband, group move to new area.

Also, it is not an honor violation unless it is known to the group’s relevant public. The killing is made public for that same audience. An offense is shameful only if it is known to the public, and the shame is removed by killing the offender and making that known to the same public. One reason Rahmi Sahindal shot his daughter Fadime was because she told the police she was afraid her father would shoot her (public shame, disloyalty): “It made me suffer very badly and, so you see, it was my last way out” (Wikan, 151)!!

**Why Killing?**

“If you had a daughter like that, you would have wanted to shoot her too!” Rahmi Sahindal, convicted of shooting his daughter Fadime for honor reasons (Wikan, 184).

**Obey, Go, or Die**

- Contempt/shame/subordination
  - $((A = B = C = ...)) > (D = E = F = ... = Z...))$ Autonomous leading men over dependents
- Disgust/shameless/exclusion
  - $((A = B = C = ...) > (D = E = F = ...)) >> Z$ Exile or death
Those who do not respond to contempt by subordinating themselves, are next subject to disgust and are excluded, exiled, or killed.

Fadime put her brother and father in jail and humiliated her father in the national media over their threats to murder her for seeing a Swedish-Iranian man, Patrik. The publicity shamed her family and their Kurdish associates in Uppsala. Patrik died in an unrelated accident, and Fadime was exiled from Uppsala. She was not murdered until four years later, when she violated exile and returned for a secret visit to Uppsala.

**Motivating Passions of Honor Killing**

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<th>What?</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>Individual Offender</th>
<th>Other Members of Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>For specific act of harm, remedied by balance: repair or revenge.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guilt.</td>
<td>Anger (indignation) towards offender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against whole person, remedied by obedience and subordination.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shame: Under eyes of group, Under eyes of broader society.</td>
<td>Contempt towards offender. Shame in each member of group due to loss of group honor: Under eyes of broader society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against whole person, who lacks sense of shame, and must be excluded, exiled or executed.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shameless?</td>
<td>Disgust towards offender. Shame of all members removed by removal of offender from group.</td>
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The honor killers are gripped by a toxic and powerful mix of shame, indignation, contempt, and disgust; with the prospect of murder providing swift relief from each; sufficient to overcome natural kin affections. Killers may feel ongoing guilt for their action.

Fadime’s father’s shouts with disgust as he shoots her: “You filthy whore!” (Wikan, 22).

**Melioration**

Further investigation required.

By one limited quantitative measure, honor killing is proportionally higher in denser populations. Probably because of more mixing and more surveillance. Prediction: honor killing should increase on moving to a city in the home country,
and increase even more on moving to a heterogeneous but integrated setting such as a European city.

Since exposing one’s group to public ridicule can justify an honor killing (see the Fadime Sahindal case), I recommend against applying the strategy of collective shaming to particular women and their groups. I recommend caution in applying collective shaming more generally. On the one hand, my study of the organized abandonment of female genital cutting counsels a positive and forward-looking approach. On the other hand, FGC is nearly universal within a reference group, but honor killing is exceptional within a group; that it is exceptional suggests that many insiders have latent reservations about the practice that could manifest as the matter becomes more discussed in civil society.

I recommend against criminalization of female genital cutting in major practicing countries. Since nearly everyone, or nearly everyone within certain large ethnic groups, cuts, criminalization is ineffective and gets in the way of more effective social measures. To repeat, honor killing is exceptional; even within the code, alternatives to killing are more frequently pursued. Thus, criminalization could have a direct effect of deterrence, and an indirect effect of expressing society’s disapproval of the practice, contributing over time to the change of social norms.

I would also recommend the approach of Tostan and several other independent NGOs of sustained deliberations within communities on local values and international human rights. Coming to a new understanding of gender equality, for example, can motivate autonomous changes in many adverse gender practices. In Somalia, the honor and modesty code is severe. The Tostan program was successful in a number of communities in Puntland, inspiring collective abandonment of FGC and declaring support for the advancement of women’s health and human rights.

Do not attack honor and modesty. Rather, allow for the liberty of adults to pursue honor and modesty or not, as they choose. The emphasis on individual choice may seem to poorly cohere with the group expectations of those born into the code. However, individual autonomy and freedom is valued in many so-called collectivist societies, it’s just that it is reserved for the leading males (Turiel, *Culture of Morality*, also Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*). Also, this seems to me the most liberal and liberalizing approach.

**Appendix: Unifying Vertical Honor and Horizontal Honor**

Reconciling horizontal honor vs. vertical honor (Stewart), or honor peers vs. competitive honor (Appiah). Adapted from Vattiero.

Honor is about ranking. Ranking includes both beliefs about equality and beliefs about inequality. Honor ranking can be analogized to indifference and preference relations.
If only one person is honored as monarch, and all else are subordinate to him, then:

- \( A > (B = C = D = E = ...) \)

The Spartan equals vs. their slaves:

- \( (A = B = C = ...) > (D = E = F = G = H...) \)

Or, if all in each caste are equal, but all castes are unequal:

- \( (A = B = C = ...) > (D = E = F = ...) > (G = H = I = ...) > (J = ...) \)

Honor among equals normally is among a reference group of (named or unnamed) individuals. Those outside the reference group lack honor, and those within who lose their honor become ranked below the remaining equals.

- \( (A = B = C = D = ...) > E \)

Roughly, dignity is due equally to all by virtue of being human. Nevertheless, some accounts of human dignity dwell at curious length on arguments about the inferiority of nonhuman animals, as if dignity would not be due to humans if they were the only animal on the planet. The supremacy habit is hard to break.

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