



# Are Mediterranean societies honor cultures?

The cultural logics of Honor, Face, and Dignity in  
Southern-Europe and the MENA Region

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***“[Greek] Sarakatsani were deeply concerned about three things: sheep, children, [...] and honour”***  
- Campbell, 1964

Mediterranean societies have long been assumed to emphasize **honor** as a core social value  
(e.g., Peristiany, 1965; Pitt-Rivers, 1968; Herzfeld, 1980...)

and often have been used as **cultural comparison groups** to Western or East-Asian societies in more recent psychological research

# Dignity

e.g., Northern US, Western Europe

Internal

Everyone

No

Autonomous,  
independent people

Contract among equals,  
moderate tit-for-tat

Internal guilt and  
external system of law

No internal compass or  
sense of dignity

# Honor

e.g., Mediterranean, South America

External/Both

Some

Yes

Competitive environment  
of rough equals

Strong reciprocity  
norms, competitive

Shame and direct  
retribution

No concerns for honor  
or opinion of others

# Face

e.g., South-East Asia

Mostly External

You have it, unless  
you lose it

Yes

Hierarchy

Guided by status within  
hierarchy, reciprocity

Shame, loss of face, and  
ingroup punishment

No concern for face or  
opinion of others

Self-Valuation

Belongs to

Can it be lost?

Context

Interactions &  
Exchanges

“Good” behavior

“Bad” people

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1

**A systematic investigation of honor endorsement in the Mediterranean is still lacking**

2

**Insights into the homogeneity of honor endorsement in Mediterranean societies are scarce**

3

**Correspondence of personal endorsement with societal perceptions of cultural values still an open question**

# Study 1

**Multinational survey study with student samples from university pools**

## **Goal:**

Mapping dignity, face, and honor in Western, Eastern, and Mediterranean regions

## **Sample:**

**N = 2942** participants from 11 countries

## **Measures:**

- » Honor, Face, Dignity Values  
*(Personal endorsement + Societal Perceptions)*
- » Honor, Face, Dignity Concerns  
*(Personal endorsement + Societal Perceptions)*

# Study 2

**Multinational survey study with samples from a more general population**

## **Goal:**

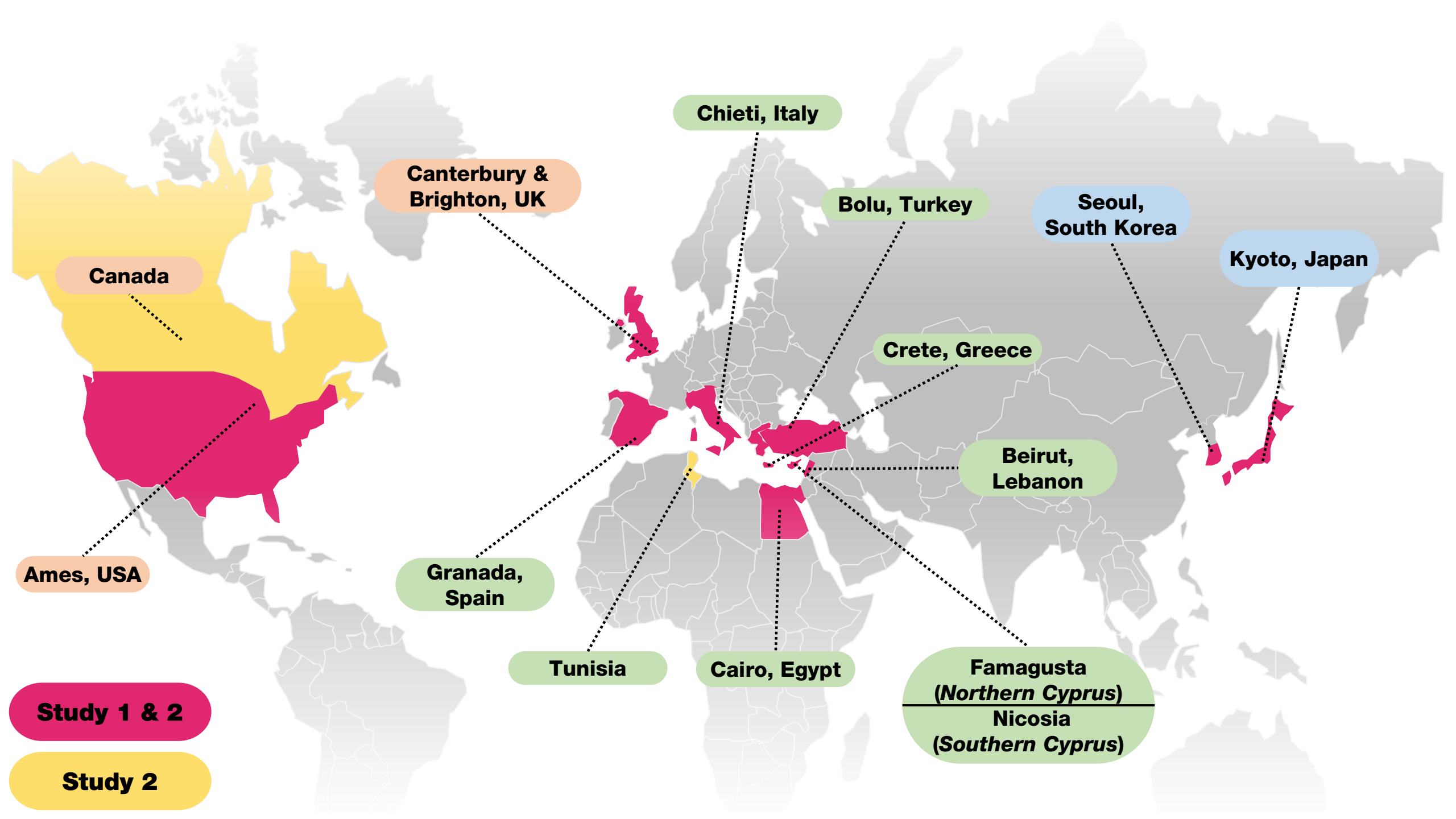
Replicating our findings for honor in a more general sample and predict apology-related behaviors

## **Sample:**

**N = 5493** participants from 14 countries

## **Measures:**

- » Honor values  
*(Personal endorsement + Societal Perceptions)*
- » Reluctance to apologize
- » Self and social image concerns due to apologizing



**Chieti, Italy**

**Canterbury & Brighton, UK**

**Bolu, Turkey**

**Seoul, South Korea**

**Kyoto, Japan**

**Canada**

**Crete, Greece**

**Beirut, Lebanon**

**Ames, USA**

**Granada, Spain**

**Tunisia**

**Cairo, Egypt**

**Famagusta (Northern Cyprus)  
Nicosia (Southern Cyprus)**

**Study 1 & 2**

**Study 2**



# Research Aim 1:

**Mapping dignity, face,  
and honor in the  
West, East, and  
Mediterranean**

# Cultural Values

(22 items from Yao et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2017)

**Held values and normative beliefs** about how people should behave

## Example Items:

*“People should not care what others around them think.” (Dignity)*

*“It is important to maintain harmony within one’s group.” (Face)*

*“People should be concerned about their family having a bad reputation.” (Honor)*

Asked for both

- » **self-endorsement:** How much do **you** agree or disagree?
- » **perceived-societal endorsement:** How much would **most people in your society** agree or disagree?

# Cultural Concerns

(24 items from Guerra et al., 2013 + own face & dignity items)

**Negative feelings** after goals have been obstructed or reputation threatened

## Example Items:

*“...you made decisions based on others’ opinions and not your own?” (Dignity)*

*“...you lost control over your behavior in front of others?” (Face)*

*“...you did something to damage your family’s reputation?” (Honor)*

Asked for both

- » **self-endorsement:** How bad would **you** feel if...
- » **perceived-societal endorsement:** How bad would **most people in your society** feel if...

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# Perceived-Societal Values

Perceptions of societal values and normative beliefs about how people should behave

Honor

Face

Dignity

**Cultures** (Gender x Country)

---

**Individuals**

Face

Dignity

Defense of  
Family  
Reputation

Self-  
Promotion &  
Retaliation

# Personal Values

Personally held values and normative beliefs about how people should behave

Honor

Face

Dignity

**Cultures** (Gender x Country)

---

**Individuals**

Face

Dignity

Defense of  
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# Perceived-Societal Values

Perceptions of societal **values and normative beliefs** about how people should behave



**Cultures** (Gender x Country)

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Individuals



# Personal Values

Personally held **values and normative beliefs** about how people should behave



**Cultures** (Gender x Country)

---

Individuals



# Mensah & Chen, 2010

## Study 1: Student Samples

## Study 2: General Population

Dignity

Face

Honor

Honor

Anglo-West	Latin Europe	South-eastern Europe	Middle East	East Asia	Anglo-West	Latin Europe	South-eastern Europe	Middle East	East Asia
U.S. U.K.	Spain Italy	Greece Southern Cyprus	Egypt Turkey Lebanon Northern Cyprus	Japan South Korea	U.S. U.K. Canada	Spain Italy	Greece Southern Cyprus	Egypt Turkey Lebanon Northern Cyprus Tunisia	Japan South Korea

## Perceptions of Society

## Own Personal Endorsement

### Study 1: Student Samples

### Study 2: General Population

Dignity	0.37 <sub>a</sub>	0.12 <sub>bc</sub>	0.16 <sub>b</sub>	-0.12 <sub>c</sub>	-0.51 <sub>d</sub>
Face	-0.21 <sub>a</sub>	-0.1 <sub>a</sub>	-0.16 <sub>a</sub>	0.07 <sub>ab</sub>	0.43 <sub>b</sub>
Honor	-0.38 <sub>a</sub>	-0.18 <sub>a</sub>	0.01 <sub>b</sub>	0.62 <sub>c</sub>	-0.48 <sub>a</sub>
	Anglo-West	Latin Europe	South-Eastern Europe	Middle East	East Asia

Honor	-0.35 <sub>a</sub>	-0.16 <sub>ab</sub>	-0.01 <sub>b</sub>	0.39 <sub>c</sub>	-0.28 <sub>a</sub>
	Anglo-West	Latin Europe	South-Eastern Europe	Middle East	East Asia

## Perceptions of Society

## Own Personal Endorsement

### Study 1: Student Samples

### Study 2: General Population

Dignity	0.45 <sub>a</sub>	-0.08 <sub>b</sub>	0.19 <sub>b</sub>	0.09 <sub>b</sub>	-0.78 <sub>c</sub>						
	-0.11 <sub>a</sub>	-0.14 <sub>a</sub>	-0.48 <sub>a</sub>	0.53 <sub>b</sub>	-0.24 <sub>a</sub>						
	-0.2 <sub>a</sub>	-0.53 <sub>b</sub>	-0.39 <sub>ab</sub>	0.58 <sub>c</sub>	0.00 <sub>a</sub>	Honor	-0.37 <sub>a</sub>	-0.17 <sub>ab</sub>	-0.31 <sub>ab</sub>	0.46 <sub>c</sub>	-0.1 <sub>b</sub>
	Anglo-West	Latin Europe	South-Eastern Europe	Middle East	East Asia		Anglo-West	Latin Europe	South-Eastern Europe	Middle East	East Asia



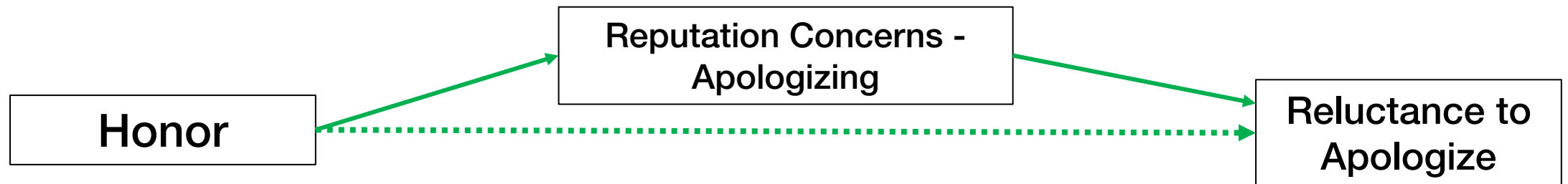
- 1. Self-ratings often did not align with people's perceptions of societies.**
- 2. Perceived-societal ratings appeared to categorize cultural groups most sensibly and clearly.**
- 3. Mediterranean cultural groups were not homogenous in their patterns of honor endorsement.**

# Research Aim 2:

**Linking our honor  
measures to  
apology-related  
behaviors**

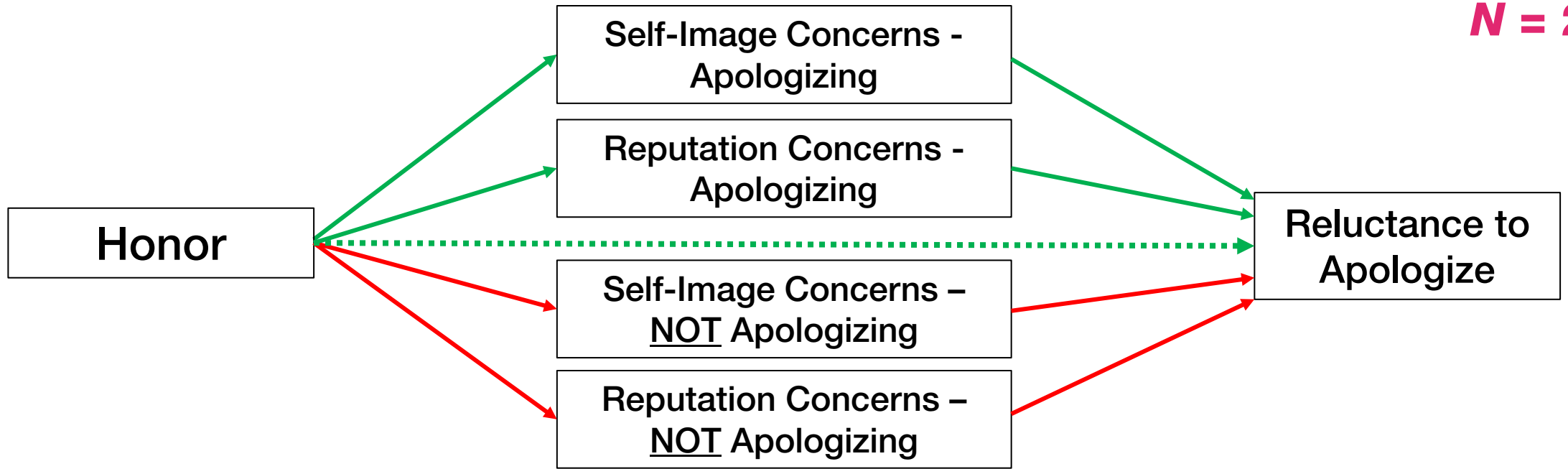
# The link between **honor** and (no) **apologies**

- » Cultures of honor emphasize **displays of strength and toughness**, which can foster **conflict, escalation, and retaliation** following transgressions
- » **Apologies**: an acknowledgement of wrongdoing or an expression of regret, may involve admitting to mistakes and retreating from initial position – all **acts that may risk a social image based on strength**
- » **Expectation**: Higher honor endorsement is linked to higher reluctance to apologize, driven by concerns about one's reputation (see e.g. Lin et al., 2022)



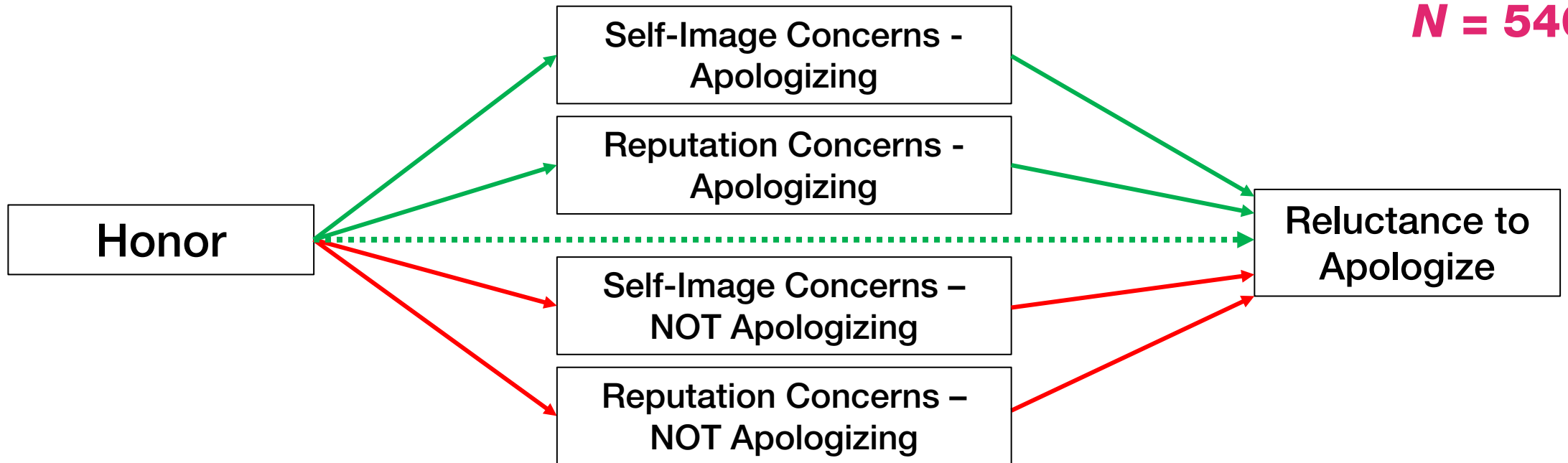
**N = 28**

**Culture-  
Level**



**N = 5466**

**Individual-  
Level**



# Personal Values

Personally held **values and normative beliefs** about how people should behave



**Cultures (Gender x Country)**

---

**Individuals**



# Perceived-Societal Values

Perceptions of societal **values and normative beliefs** about how people should behave



**Cultures (Gender x Country)**

---

**Individuals**



# Self-Image Concerns

(9 items adapted from Lin et al., 2022)

Concerns about how apologizing or not apologizing may **negatively impact one's own self-image**

## Example Items:

*"I would see myself as weak after apologising for a wrongdoing."*

*"If I failed to apologise for something I have done wrong, I would lose respect for myself."*

# Reputation Concerns

(9 items adapted from Lin et al., 2022)

Concerns about how apologizing or not apologizing may **negatively impact one's reputation**

## Example Items:

*"I would look weak to other people if I apologised for a wrongdoing."*

*"If I failed to apologise for something I have done wrong, I would lose others' respect."*

# Reluctance to Apologize

(4 items adapted from Hornsey et al., 2017)

Self-reported **frequency of apologies** or **likelihood to offer apologies** following a wrongdoing

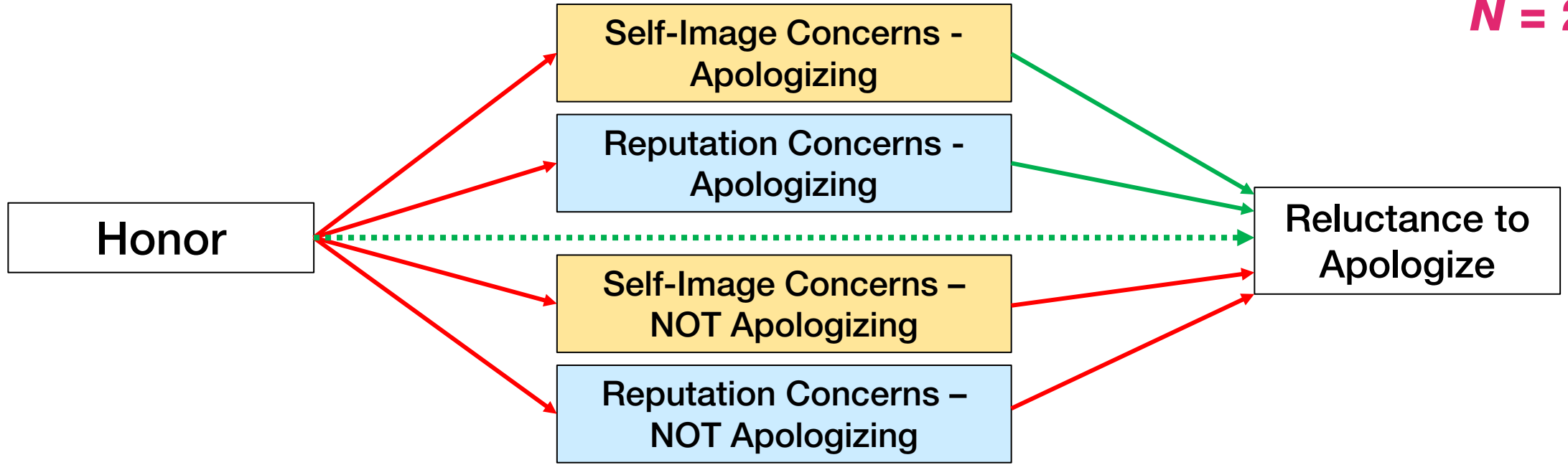
## Example Items:

*"I rarely apologise to other people."*

*"I am unlikely to apologize if I have done something wrong."*

**N = 28**

**Culture-  
Level**

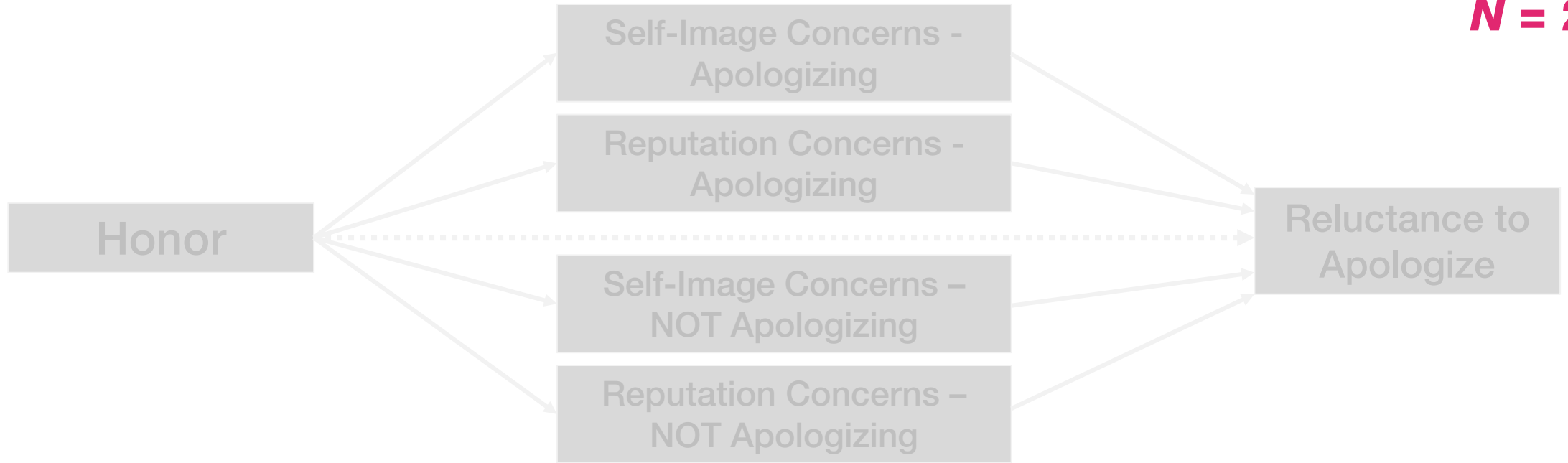


**N = 5466**

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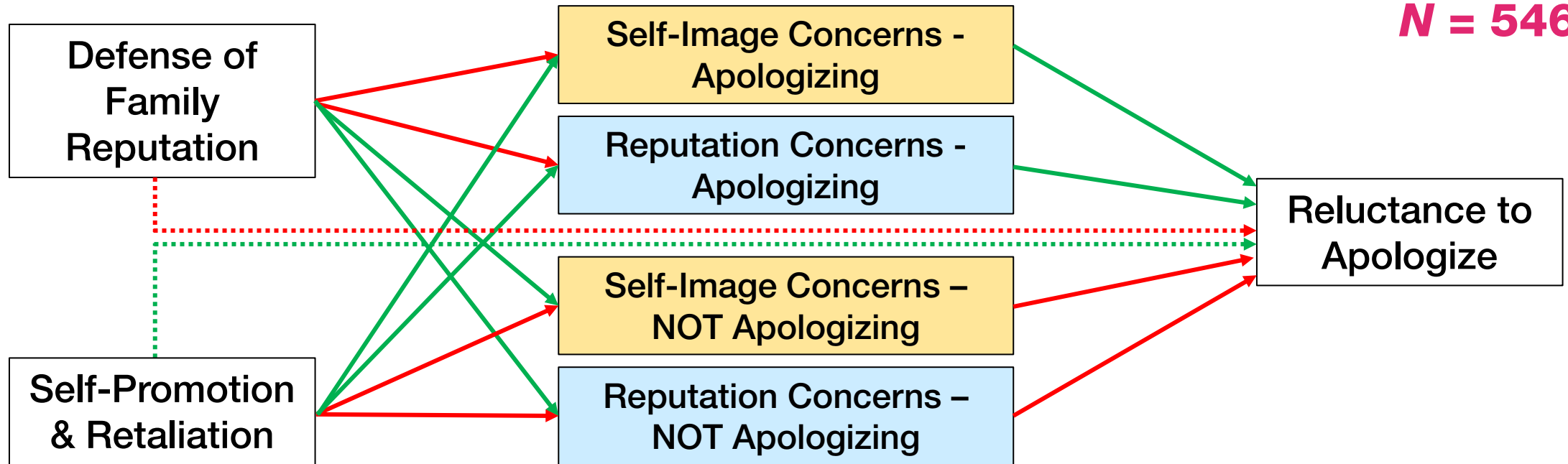
**N = 28**

**Culture-  
Level**



**N = 5466**

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- 1. Mediterranean societies did show an emphasis on honor, but were **not homogenous**.**
- 2. The particular **level of analysis** as well as the **type of measure** mattered.**
- 3. Distinguishing **sub-facets of honor** can offer unique and meaningful insights.**

# Thank you for your attention!



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