Proximal and Distal Honor Fit and Subjective Well-Being in the Mediterranean Region

Alexander Kirchner-Häusler[1], Felix D. Schönbrodt[2], Ayse K. Uskul[1], and the HONORLOGIC Team

[1] University of Sussex, UK   [2] Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Germany

HONORLOGIC

Introduction

People's psychological tendencies are attuned to their sociocultural context. These culture-specific ways of being, feeling, and thinking are believed to assist individuals in successfully navigating their environment, and stronger "fit" with one's cultural environment has consistently been linked to better psychological outcomes (e.g., Dressler, 2012; De Leersnyder, 2017; Fulmer et al., 2010; Dressler, 2012; Stephens et al., 2012).

The current study examined the link between subjective well-being and cultural fit in **honor,** a core value and driver of social behavior in wide regions of the world (Cross & Uskul, 2022). Honor is described as "the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of society" (Pitt-Rivers, 1965, p. 21), reflecting the idea that an individual's worth is not only self-defined (e.g., to be proud of one's personal accomplishments) or claimed, but also the results of one's reputation and status bestowed by others (e.g., to be known by others as a respectable and moral person).

Due to these intra- and interpersonal elements, honor is an interesting case for fit research: even if an individual endorses honor as a moral principle, the cultural dynamics surrounding honor may only fully unfold if the environment is also responsive to one's claims to honor and sanctions dishonorable behaviors in others.
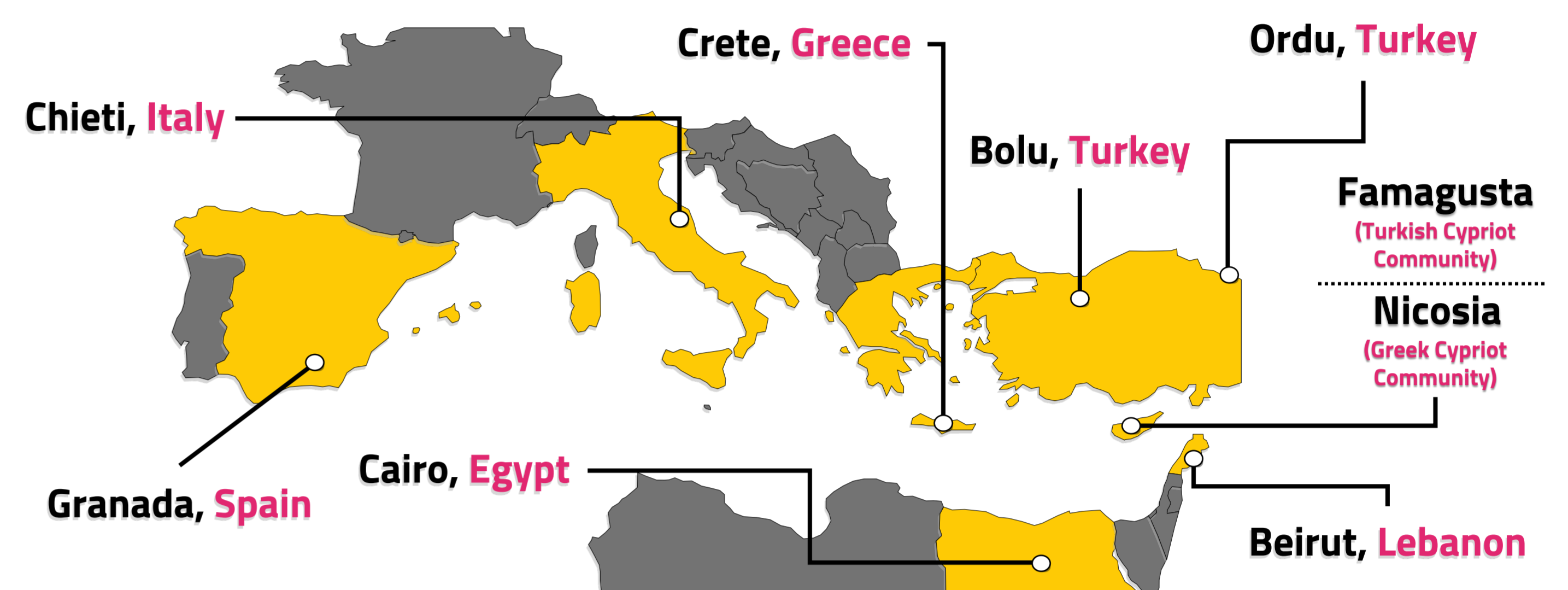
Research Question | Do people who show stronger fit between their own honor endorsement and the honor endorsement of others in their social environment also show better well-being?

Method

Procedure | Online Questionnaire with N = 2,257 students from 8 countries in the Mediterranean and MENA region

Subjective Well-being | Satisfaction with 9 domains of life (OECD, 2013)

Honor | Measured both as **values** (stable beliefs about what is good, right, and desirable; Yao et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2017) and **concerns** (appraisals of the relevance of situations to our values, goals, and needs; Guerra et al., 2013). Each scale was rated twice: once as participants' own endorsement, and once as participants' perception of most people in their society (perceived-societal endorsement).

Chieti, **Italy** · Crete, **Greece** · Ordu, **Turkey** · Bolu, **Turkey** · Famagusta (Turkish Cypriot Community) · Nicosia (Greek Cypriot Community) · Granada, **Spain** · Cairo, **Egypt** · Beirut, **Lebanon**

Results

① Distal Fit with Society: Response Surface Analysis

›› Using Response Surface, we examined fit in every honor dimension separately and found positive fit effects for distal fit in three of our six honor dimensions: *family reputation values, strong self-image values,* and *family authority concerns*
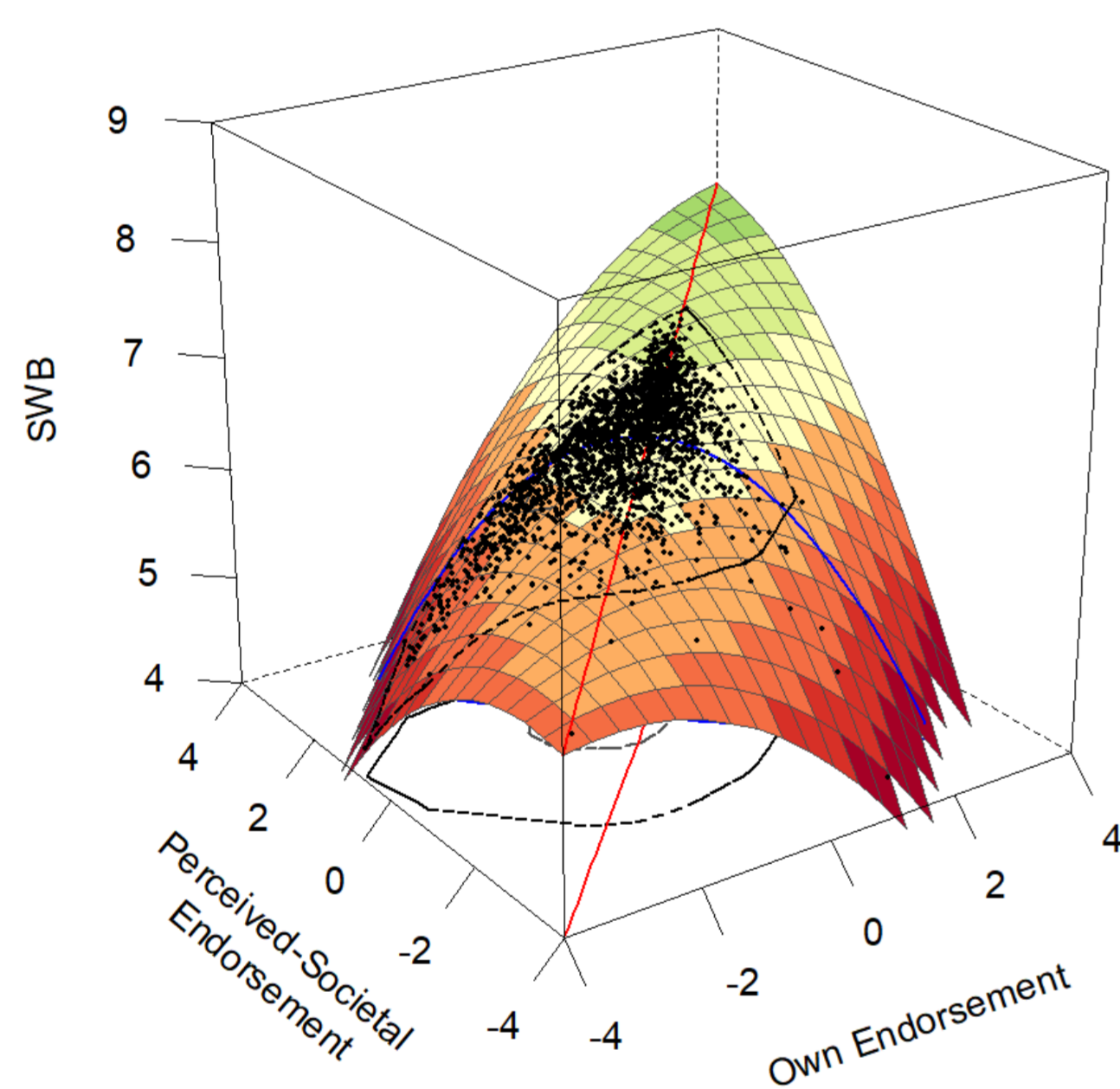
Family Reputation

›› Factor emphasizing the **maintenance and defense of family reputation** (e.g., "*People should not allow others to insult their family*")
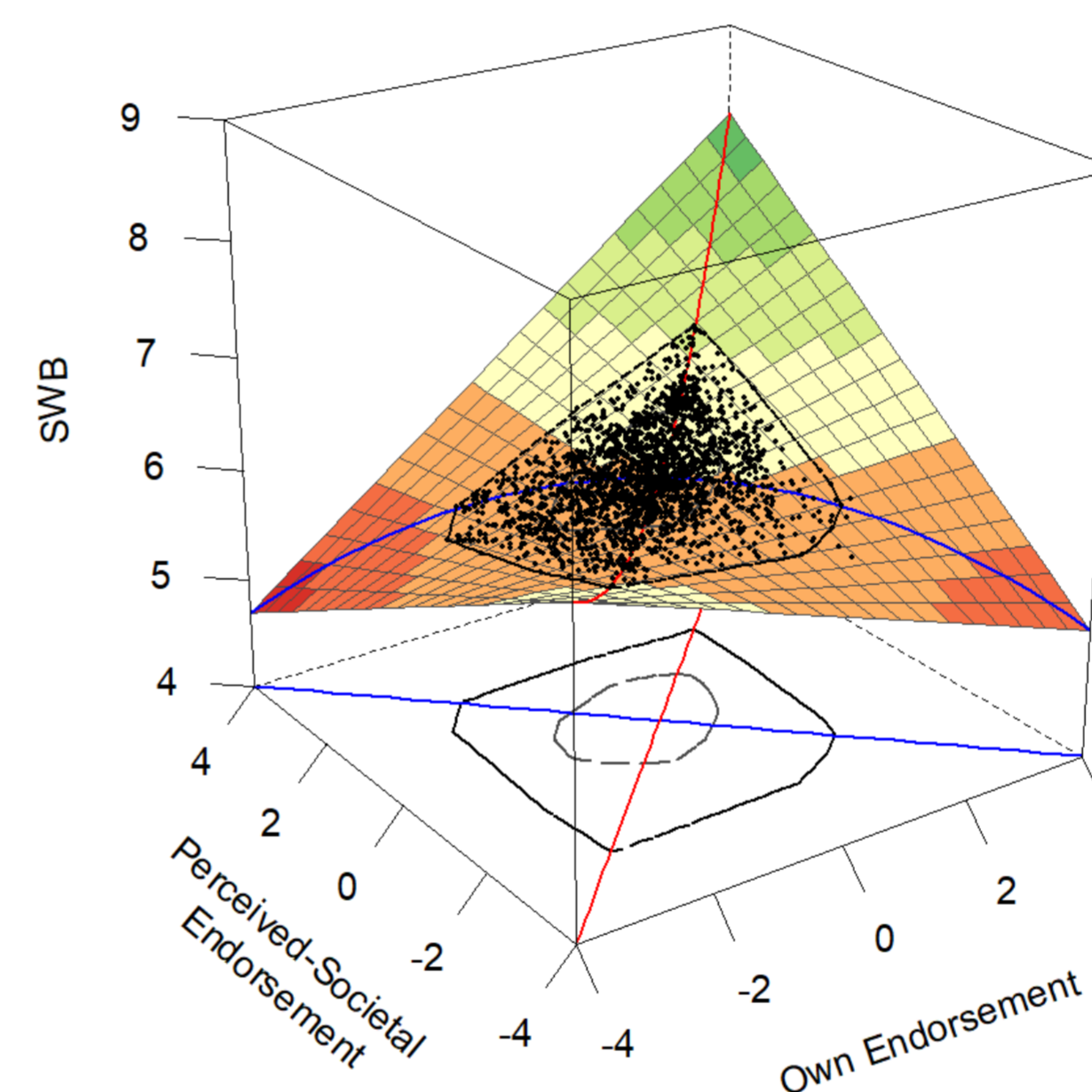
›› **Positive Fit Effect:** In the best fitting Rising Ridge Model, stronger fit is linked with higher well-being, but higher honor ratings but higher honor ratings by themselves are also linked to better well-being
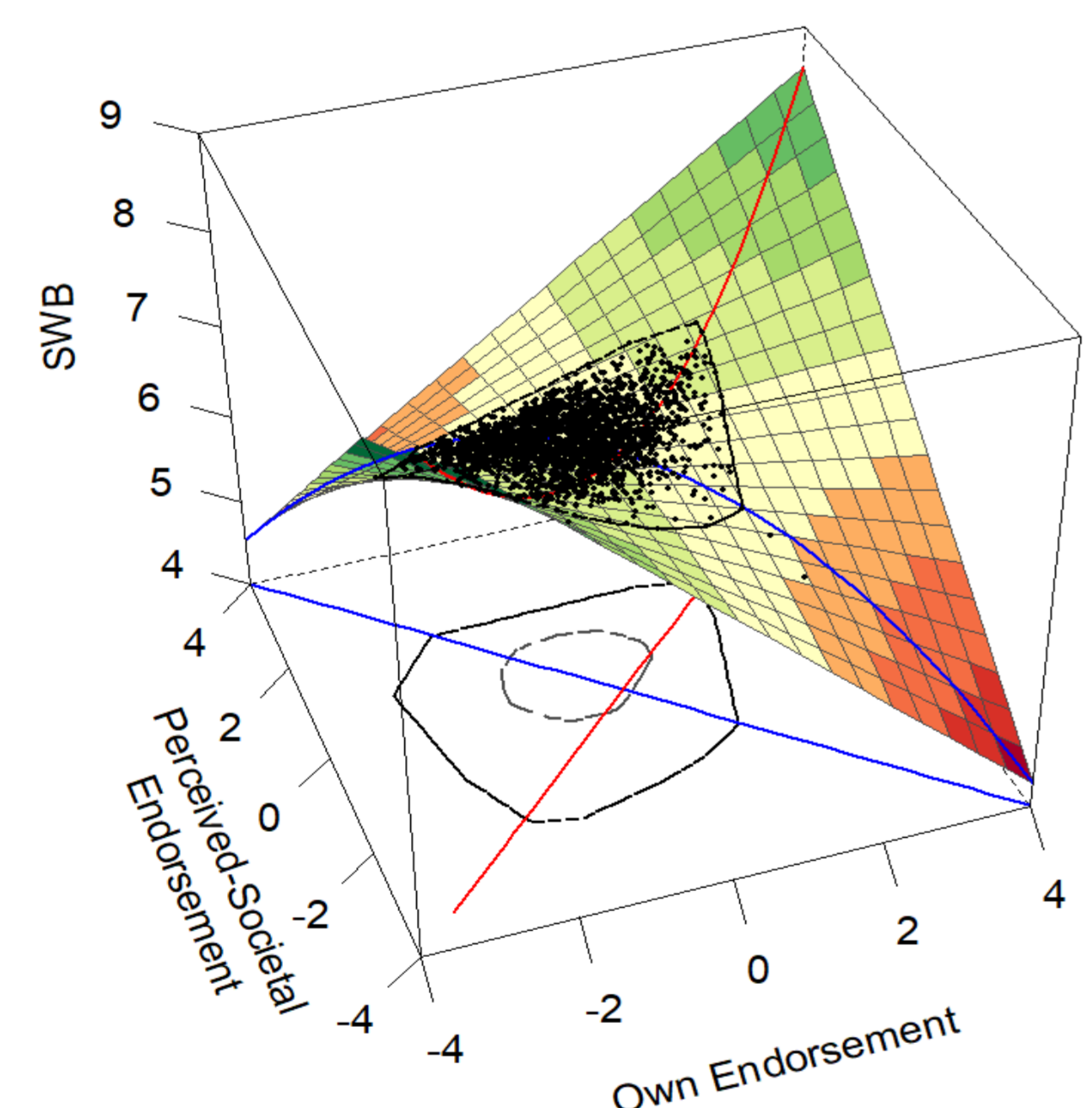
Strong Self-Image

›› Factor emphasizing the need to **project oneself as strong and powerful** and to **respond decisively to honor threats** (e.g., "*People always need to show off their power in front of their competitors*")

›› **Positive Fit Effect:** In the best fitting Interaction Model, stronger fit is linked with higher well-being, but higher or lower honor ratings are also linked to better well-being

Family Authority

›› Factor emphasizing **authority and control over one's family group** (e.g., "*How bad would you feel if you lacked authority over your own family?*")

›› **Positive Fit Effect:** In the best fitting Interaction Model, stronger fit is linked with higher well-being, but higher honor ratings by themselves are also linked to better well-being

›› We did not find any fit effects for the other dimensions of sexual propriety concerns, family reputation concerns, and integrity concerns

② Proximal Fit with Peer Group: Profile Analysis

›› Using profile analyses, we calculated proximal fit across all honor dimensions as the similarity with the cultural average pattern (ICC-DE; McCrae, 2008), and found that that stronger fit was again tendentially linked to better well-being

Variable	Estimate	SE	z	p	95%-CI LL	95%-CI UL
Fixed Effects						
Intercept	6.08	0.14	44.86	<.001*	5.81	6.35
Proximal Honor Fit	0.17	0.08	2.25	.02†	0.02	0.32
Error Terms						
Intercept Variance (Lvl-2)	0.12	0.07	1.79	.07	-0.01	0.25
Residual Variance (Lvl-1)	2.85	0.08	33.53	<.001*	2.68	3.02

Note. Shown are parameter coefficients for the multi-level regression model for proximal fit across all six honor facets. Fit was computed with the ICC-Double Entry with one's same-gender university group. * $p < .005$, † $p < .05$

Conclusion

›› **Better well-being was linked to both higher distal fit with one's perceived society (but not in all honor dimensions) and higher proximal fit with one's peer group (across all honor dimensions).** These effects fit previous work on the important role of cultural fit in well-being and are consistent with the idea that honor is a construct that includes an interplay of individual and societal elements (Pitt-Rivers, 1965). They also further highlight honor as an important social construct in the Mediterranean / MENA region for "living a good life" rather than merely a precursor for interpersonal retaliation and violence (Leung & Cohen, 2011).

›› **However, the dimension of honor under study as well as the particular assessment method mattered for fit.** Firstly, we found more fit effects for dimensions touching upon family and an image of strength and authority – all crucial dimensions in the interpersonal dynamics of honor (Uskul & Cross, 2019). Secondly, we found more fit effects for *values* (guiding beliefs) rather than *concerns* (affective responses to goal obstruction), possibly because the positively worded statements used to measure honor values lend themselves better to perceived-societal ratings than instances of threat to relevant honor goals used to measure our honor concerns.

Check out the full paper and other papers from our HONORLOGIC project on our project website: