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11 Stereotype content across cultures as a function of group status

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People want to know where they stand. Groups care deeply about where other groups stand. When a new group immigrates in significant numbers, people first ask whether they come with friendly or hostile intent. Do they come to cooperate, participate, and assimilate, or do they come to exploit, compete, and steal? Naturally, people want to know who may help or harm them. However, immediately after determining who is friend and who is foe, people want to know whether the other is capable of enacting those intentions. A fundamental question is the group’s perceived status and from it follows their perceived capability to enact their intent, for good or ill.

To an extraordinary degree, people assume that groups of high status deserve it. As we will see, people all over the world agree that rich people, professionals, employers, and entrepreneurial immigrants achieve their high status with traits reflecting intelligence, competence, capability, and skill. Conversely, people all agree that others who are poor, homeless, drug addicted, or unemployed likewise deserve it because they are stupid, incompetent, incapable, and unskilled.

As our data will indicate, the strength of this effect is huge. In the senior author’s career spanning decades, she has never observed correlations of these magnitudes. Why should people be so convinced that those with high status are endowed with superior competence and those of lower status are denied the same traits? This chapter explores the evidence and the reasons for this status endowment effect.

Social status and competence

Recently, we have developed the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), a theory of group stereotypes suggesting that groups array in a space defined by perceived competition and perceived group status (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu, 2002). From perceived competition, observers infer lack of warmth, friendliness, and trustworthiness, and from perceived status, people infer competence; our theory emphasizes the
two-dimensional space. Here, because the current volume focusses on comparison, we just focus on perceived group status, which is a relative judgment.

According to the SCM, people infer that other people's traits reflect their social status. Several factors incline people to this inference. All complex societies are hierarchically organized (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Stereotypes come from perceived economic, geographic, normative, and power relationships among groups (Eagly and Kite, 1987; LeVine and Campbell, 1972; Linssen and Hagendoorn, 1994; Poppe, 2001; Poppe and Linssen, 1999).

The perceived link between a group's societal outcomes and its competence serves several functions. This link may represent a group-level correspondence bias, namely, that people's behavior (in this case, their position) reflects their traits (Gilbert and Malone, 1995). Or it might reflect just-world thinking, namely, that people get what they deserve (Lerner and Miller, 1978). At the level of groups, it justifies the system (Jost and Banaji, 1994) and legitimates power-prestige rankings (Berger, Rosenholz, and Zelditch, 1980; Ridgeway and Berger, 1986).

The link is not a foregone conclusion and the opposite viewpoint is conceivable: cultural stereotypes could instead reflect group-level sour grapes. A bigot might reason that the high-status outgroup inherited, lucked out, or cheated, so they do not deserve their position and they actually are stupid. Consider comments about royal families being stupid or a rich heir who was "born on third base and thinks he hit a triple."

Many intergroup stereotypes turn in part on consciousness of power relations; stereotypes justify the status quo (Berger et al., 1980; Fiske, 1993; Glick and Fiske, 2001; Jost and Banaji, 1994; Jost and Burgess, 2000; Ridgeway and Berger, 1986). Envious stereotypes devolve on that high-competence but low-warmth lot who seem to be doing better than others. Prideful stereotypes belong to those ingroups or emblems of society that serve as reference groups, possessing both high status and the competence to achieve it. United States datasets have found the predicted correlations between perceptions of status and competence (Fiske et al., 2002). Central and Eastern European stereotypes also support this competence-status prediction (Phalet and Poppe, 1997; Poppe and Linssen, 1999). Similarly, in ratings of European nations, perceived economic power predicts perceived competence (Poppe, 2001; Poppe and Linssen, 1999). Also, person perception (Wojciszke, Barylka, and Mikiewicz, 2003) demonstrates respect based on perceived status, as mediated by perceived competence. Stereotypes based on social structure legitimate an unfair, uncontrollable status quo (Glick and Fiske, 2001). Status correlates with competence stereotypes, justifying the apparent

meritocracy. System-justification legitimates such political and economic group inequalities (Jost and Banaji, 1994). Superordinate groups justify their advantage by viewing the status quo as fair, and even subordinate groups endorse this view because it explains their own outcomes. For example, belief in a just world (Lerner and Miller, 1978) and the western cultural ideology of the Protestant Work Ethic (Katz and Haas, 1988; Kay and Jost, 2003) provide moral justification for the unequal distribution of resources: groups with high-status, well-paying jobs must have earned them through talent and hard work; groups on the bottom deserve it because they are incompetent and lazy.

Additionally, people may simply infer a group's traits from their social position. In interpreting behavior, westerners over-use internal dispositions, ignoring the influence of the situation (Gilbert and Malone, 1995; Jones, 1979; Ross, 1977). Thus, when a group is supposedly over-represented in high-status positions, people may attribute this outcome to the group's perceived competence.

Status and competence in Asian settings

These explanations—system justification, just-world beliefs, the Protestant Work Ethic and dispositional bias—while plausible in the western context, plant the seeds of doubt for an eastern context. First, culture shapes the ideologies that legitimate prejudice (Cohen and Nisbett, 1994; Crandall, D'Anello, Sakall, Lazarus, Wieczorkowska, and Feather, 2001; Glick et al., 2000, 2004). Collectively-held ideologies shape what people see as good and bad, thereby stipulating which groups will become the targets of which prejudice. For example, individualistic North Americans score particularly high in just-world beliefs (Loo, 2002), which morally justify good and bad outcomes, perhaps reinforcing the perceived status-competence relationship. Similarly, the Protestant Work Ethic lauds economically successful individuals and groups. Collectivistic cultures, without the Protestant Work Ethic and typically lower in just-world beliefs, might not generate the same link.

Second, North Americans are more likely than members of some other cultures to attribute people's behaviors and outcomes (competition, status) to dispositions (warmth, competence) as opposed to situational factors (Choi, Nisbett, and Norenzayan, 1999; Miller, 1984). Cultures without such a strong dispositional bias might not infer traits from structural outcomes. If not universal, the status-competence link might be emphasized more in individualistic, dispositional, meritocratic ideologies.

Thus, our inquiries required not only going outside the US, to Europe, but beyond, to the Asian and Middle Eastern settings. If the
status-endowment effect extends that far, it approaches a potential human universal.

Overview of the international studies

Any discussion of panchural phenomena requires testing across multiple cultures. So we tested the status-competence hypothesis by varying across cultures the two central factors that might have been driving the effects in the United States: perceivers and target groups. American perceivers might be influenced by unique norms, ideologies, and attribution biases that exclusively support our proposed principles. Likewise, the status-competence relationship might be embedded in American society's unusually heterogeneous mélange of groups or in its unique immigration history. For these reasons, we tested our proposed principles across multiple non-American perceivers and target groups.

We collected data from seventeen non-US samples representing fourteen nations. We gathered data from eleven samples in nine European countries (seven EU members – Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and U.K. – and two non-EU members – Bulgaria and Norway), three East Asian nations (Hong Kong, Japan, and S. Korea), Costa Rica, and Israel (two samples – Jewish and Muslim).

In a first study, we used the same target groups as in our US studies, but surveyed a non-US sample of perceivers (Belgium). If the perceived status-competence relationship stems from characteristics specific to the perceivers' culture, it should fail to generalize to non-US respondents. Next, varying target groups, nine European nations rated the then current fifteen EU member nations, which constituted an alternative, pre-determined set of relevant groups, thereby eliminating concerns about biased selection of target groups and the potentially restricted applicability of the model to US target groups. In the third set of studies, seven samples from six nations (five samples from collectivist cultures – Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Israeli-Muslim, Japan, and S. Korea; two from individualistic cultures – Belgium and Israeli – Jewish) rated lists of relevant groups in their respective societies; the groups were generated in preliminary studies in the same populations. This combined emic-etic (insider-outsider) approach unites culturally indigenous approaches to data collection (i.e., indigenous lists of groups) with imported approaches (i.e., our scales; Hui and Triandis, 1985). The goal is to make cross-cultural comparisons using equivalent stimuli, while simultaneously using ecologically-valid qualities of the construct of interest. This approach can provide a relatively unbiased test of our hypothesis – that in each sample perceived status would correlate positively with competence ratings.

Method and results

Samples and participants One thousand five hundred and thirty-five respondents from fourteen nations completed the questionnaire (Cuddy et al., 2004). University students largely comprised all samples, which were 60 percent female with an average age of twenty-one. The samples included: 124 students (40 in Sample 1, 41 in Sample 2, 43 in Sample 3) at the Catholic University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium; 100 students at the Institute of Sociology, Sofia, Bulgaria; 150 students at the Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, France; 98 students at the Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tuebingen, Germany; 122 students at Leiden University, Netherlands; 40 students at the University of Tromso, Norway; 102 students at the University of Lisbon, Portugal; 199 students at the University of Granada, Spain; 41 students at Cardiff University, Wales; 122 students at the University of Costa Rica; 60 students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong; 82 students at the University of Tsukuba in Japan; 91 students at the Ewha Women's University in South Korea; and 100 Muslim students and 104 Jewish students at Tel-Aviv University in Israeli.

Questionnaire and procedure As noted, different samples rated different groups. A Belgian sample rated groups from American studies (Fiske et al., 2002, Study 2), but translated into French. Samples from the nine European countries rated the fifteen then-current member nations of the EU (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom). Seven samples from six nations (five from collectivist cultures – Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Israeli-Muslim, Japan, and S. Korea; two from individualistic cultures – Belgium and Israeli-Jewish) rated their own lists of relevant groups, generated in preliminary studies (described below). Like the groups used in American studies, these groups varied on race, gender, socio-economic status, occupation, religion, immigration history, etc.

Preliminary Groups-Listing Study. In seven samples, in their respective native languages, participants read and answered the following three questions (from Fiske et al., 2002, Study 2):

1. Off the top of your head, what various types of people do you think today's society categorizes into groups (i.e., based on ability, age, ethnicity, gender, occupation, race, religion, etc.)?
2. What groups are considered to be of very low status by [Belgian/Costa Rican/Hong Kong/Israeli/Japanese/South Korean] society?
3. What groups, based on the same criteria used in the first question, do you consider yourself to be a member of?

Question 1 aimed at getting participants to list relevant social groups in the least constrained way. In US studies, this question typically yielded lists that included neither very low status outgroups that might fit the pure antipathy model of prejudice, nor did it typically generate ingroups. Questions 2 and 3 were intended to insure that all types of groups would be listed. Groups listed by at least 15 percent of participants were included on the final questionnaire. In all samples, the number of groups was between twenty and twenty-seven.

Questionnaire. Participants rated the social groups on items measuring competence (competent, confident, skillful, able) and status (prestigious jobs, economic success, high education level), in addition to warmth (warm, nice, friendly, and sincere) and competitiveness (resources, more power, and special breaks). (See Table 11.1 for complete wording. For a complete discussion of warmth and competitiveness, see Fiske et al., 2002.) The scales were developed and refined over the course of several studies (Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, and Glick, 1999). The original list of traits included both positive and negative items and many items unrelated to warmth and competence. Principal components factor analyses consistently pointed to two trait factors—one reflecting warmth and the other reflecting competence. Negative traits did not consistently load onto one factor, so they were dropped from the lists. For each nation, translators converted the questionnaire to the relevant language and all independent back-translations were satisfactory. Scale reliabilities were sufficiently high for all scales in all samples, competence (alpha = .67 to .85); and status (alpha = .69 to .84).

Using five-point scales (1 = Not at all; 5 = Extremely), participants read, "We ... are interested in how different groups are considered by [Belgian/German/Hong Kong etc] society. We are not interested in your personal opinions, but in how you believe others view these groups." The instructions aimed to reduce social desirability concerns and to draw on perceived societal stereotypes as culturally-shared knowledge, as in our earlier work.

Results

In all seventeen samples, exactly as hypothesized, perceived status highly correlated with competence ratings, average \( r = .77 \), range \( .55 \) (Israel-Muslim) to \( .87 \) (Hong Kong and Spain), all \( ps < .01 \). This held both for samples from relatively individualistic societies (average \( r = .78 \)) and from relatively collectivistic societies (average \( r = .71 \)). Table 11.2 presents the status-competence correlations for all samples. Figure 11.1 depicts the strong relationship between status and competence averaged across EU samples, showing the fifteen EU nations scattered on competence and status ratings. Figure 11.2 depicts the status-competence relationship in a collectivistic sample, Hong Kong, showing the groups scattered on competence and status ratings. These correlations land in the ballpark of good reliabilities, but the status and competence items clearly are not measuring the same construct twice. Note that the status questions ask demographic questions (jobs, education, wealth), whereas the competence items ask about individual personality traits (see Table 11.1).¹

All of the samples were demographically homogeneous, having come from college student populations, limiting our ability to compare responses of higher- and lower-status demographic groups. However, sex-based status differences favoring men are pervasive across cultures (Harris, 1991), and most of these samples included both female and male respondents. In all samples, analyses revealed no significant differences or trends between responses based on participants' sex; for female and male participants the status-competence correlation was equally high.

What does it mean?

The current findings converge with growing evidence from studies of specific groups: some overarching principles of prejudice and stereotyping may be pan-cultural, while some of their manifestations are culturally idiosyncratic. The overarching principles that have been tested thus far include high-level constructs, such as social structure (Glick et al., 2000, 2004), cultural ideologies (Crandall et al., 2001), and threats to resources and values (Stephan et al., 2000, 1998), all of which hold up across varied perceivers. To this we can now add that perceived high-status endows its occupants with perceived competence, confidence, and capability.

¹ One status item — "well-educated" — could be viewed as having substantial overlap with one competence item — "skillful." In all samples but one (Germany), re-analyses of the data without "skillful" revealed no significant decreases in the strength of the status-competence correlation.
Table 11.2. Status-competence correlations, all studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Status-Competence r</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US, students</td>
<td>.88*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiske et al., 2002b, Study 2 (n = 147)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US, national sample</td>
<td>.83*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick, 2004, (n = 571)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium, students, US groups (n = 40)</td>
<td>.75*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU nations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (n = 43)</td>
<td>.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (n = 150)</td>
<td>.63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (n = 98)</td>
<td>.68*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands (n = 122)</td>
<td>.84*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal (n = 102)</td>
<td>.85*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain (n = 199)</td>
<td>.87*</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK (n = 41)</td>
<td>.85*</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU combined (n = 755)</td>
<td>.89*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-EU members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria (n = 100)</td>
<td>.72*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway (n = 40)</td>
<td>.84*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collectivist samples</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Costa Rica (n = 121)</td>
<td>.73*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong (n = 60)</td>
<td>.87*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (n = 83)</td>
<td>.75*</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea (n = 91)</td>
<td>.64*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israeli samples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel - Jewish (n = 104)</td>
<td>.83*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel - Muslim (n = 100)</td>
<td>.55*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .01

At the same time, some specific manifestations of these principles vary depending on culture and other contextual factors. For example, the groups considered relevant in each society do vary somewhat (Cuddy et al., 2004), the contents of particular groups' stereotypes often vary between cultures (Dion, Pak, and Dion, 1990; Shaffer, Crepaz, and Sun, 2000; Wheeler and Kim, 1997), as do the endorsement of prejudice-legitimizing ideologies (Crandall et al., 2001) and the relative weights of different intergroup threats in predicting prejudice (Stephan et al., 2000, 1998). Our research suggests that in any culture, a group's competence stereotype can be predicted from their status relative to other groups. However, culture influences the status a given group will have in a given society. As a result, specific group stereotypes vary across cultures.

Prior investigations all have focussed on prejudice toward specific groups; none has proposed general stereotyping principles that will hold across varied perceivers and groups. The SCM provides a set of rules that emphasizes similarities in the basic structure of intergroup relations. The research summarized here suggests that this basic framework remains intact across cultures, allowing us to predict how groups are likely to be stereotyped on competence, based on their perceived status relative to other groups in their respective society.

Other research reflects the psychological bases of status inequality. In this volume, Glick reports data from twenty-five nations for Ambivalent Sexism toward women (Ambivalent Sexism Inventory; ASI) and seventeen nations for Ambivalence toward Men (Ambivalence toward Men Inventory; AMI). The ASI and AMI national averages relate strongly to the Power Distance Index (PDI), even when the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is partialled out. The ASI and AMI scales not only reflect inequality, but also tap underlying values that support it (since the PDI measures support for social hierarchy).

In all this correlational data, causal direction is an issue. Correlations linking status to competence are encouraging for our model. However, correlations are only correlations. One could reasonably argue that social status precedes the perceived traits of groups and so logically should be
prior and therefore potentially causal. Indeed, experimental interpersonal research supports this causal direction. For example, conspicuous random assignments to low-status (e.g., clerks) or high-status (e.g., managers) roles cause people to perceive themselves (Langer and Benevento, 1978) and others (Humphrey, 1985) as less or more competent, respectively. But one could argue the opposite, that the groups’ actual or perceived competence gives them their place in society. We do not deny this possibility, but we focus on perceptions.

Our methods aimed to capture stereotypes as culturally-shared, as opposed to personal, beliefs. Thus, we invoked a common frame of reference by asking people to report society’s views of groups. One might argue that this approach obscures individuals’ true beliefs, failing to reflect an accurate representation of the social world. However, people reliably project their own beliefs and feelings onto the beliefs and feelings of others (e.g., Marks and Miller, 1987). This “false consensus effect” generalizes to the domain of stereotyping: personal stereotypes highly correlate with reported cultural stereotypes (Gordijn, Koomen, and Stapel, 2001; Krueger, 1996). Moreover, mere exposure to (even without endorsement of) cultural stereotypes strongly influences perceptions and behavior toward outgroups (e.g., Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986). The importance of these findings is reflected in the field’s increasing focus on cultural stereotypes (e.g., Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, and Sullivan, 2003; Glick and Fiske, 2001; Rudman and Fairchild, 2004).

Still, it is possible that personal stereotypes might not always correspond with cultural stereotypes. For the data presented here, participants not only rated outgroups—they also rated some of their own demographic ingroups and reference groups. Thus, comparisons of personal and cultural stereotypes might be particularly relevant here. In western samples, there is some evidence of ingroup and reference group favoritism on warmth and competence (Cuddy et al., 2004). Yet across samples and cultures, female (lower status) and male respondents (higher status) reported equally high status-competence correlations. In SCM data collected from a representative United States sample (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick, 2005), we found very few differences when comparing demographic groups by age, sex, religion, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, and region of the country (e.g., Northeastern US, Southern US). These findings again underscore the power of dominant cultural stereotypes as shared meaning systems. When using this common frame of reference (i.e., society’s views), even members of low status, disadvantaged groups rate higher status groups as more competent. Our ongoing research explores this issue more deeply by asking people to report either cultural or personal stereotypes (Leslie, Constantine, Fiske, Dunham, and Banaji, 2005); early data indicate that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Competence Correlation in Hong Kong Sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.5</td>
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Figure 11.2: Status-competence correlation in Hong Kong sample
people report similar status hierarchies on more personal measures. However, compared to societal measures, they even more acutely believe that high-status people have some faults (lack of warmth) and low-status people have some virtues (warmth).

For us, the main lesson of this persistent, high, and troubling correlation is that people want to believe in the meaning of social hierarchies. This propensity has many names, most recently system justification (Jost and Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2003). But individuals differ in their defense of the status quo hierarchies, according to their social dominance orientation (Overbeck, Jost, Mosso, and Flizik, 2004), their conservative ideology (Jost, Kruglanski, Glasner, and Sullaway, 2003), and belief in a just world (Jost and Burgess, 2000). Cultures vary, too, as our data indicate. Nevertheless, the correlations are always high and always positive, showing that, according to world-wide human belief, who you are depends on where you stand.

Author note

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