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Warmth-Competence Tradeoffs in Impression Management across Race and Social-Class Divides

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The Great Recession widened social-class divides, so social interactions across gaps in workplace status and in race generally may be more salient and more fraught. Different statuses and races both carry stereotypes that targets know (meta-perceptions, how they expect to be viewed by the outgroup). In both cross-status and cross-race interactions, targets may aim to manage the impressions they create. Reviewing literature and our own recent work invokes (a) the role of the Stereotype Content Model's two dimensions of social perception, namely warmth and competence; (b) the compensation effect, a tendency to tradeoff between them, especially downplaying one to convey the other; and (c) diverging warmth and competence concerns of people with lower and higher status and racial-group positions. Higher-status people and Whites, both stereotyped as competent but cold, seek to warm up their image. Lower-status people and Blacks, both stereotyped as warm but incompetent, seek respect for their competence. Overviews of two previously separate research programs and the background literature converge on shared findings that higher-status people, comparing down, display a competence downshift, consistent with communicating apparent warmth. Meanwhile, lower-status people, comparing up, often display less warmth, to communicate competence. Previous research and our diverse samples—online workplace scenarios, online cross-race interactions, and presidential candidates'

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speeches—suggest a novel, robust interpersonal mechanism that perpetuates race, status, and social-class divides.

Introduction

The Great Recession famously increased inequality between the 1% and the 99%, but also more generally between higher and lower socioeconomic statuses (SES) across the income spectrum. As one interpersonal result, people must manage the ever-more salient and fraught comparisons across class differences. Racial wealth gaps have widened as well, and race correlates with social class. Hence, comparison dilemmas force individuals to deal with society's social-class stereotypes (Durante et al., 2017) and racial stereotypes. The societal predicament becomes personal—one individual being higher and another lower, relative to each other—but they must nevertheless interact tactfully and with self-integrity.

How do people manage interpersonal interactions across social-class divides? The research summarized here investigates how people portray themselves when interacting with someone higher or lower in social status, defined by either social class or race. In general, people use strategies of appearing warm or competent in order to affect the impressions others form about them: When trying to ingratiate themselves, or appear warm, people act considerately; when trying to self-promote, or appear competent, they boast (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Our research asks whether self-presenting to a higher- versus lower-status other shifts individuals' warmth-competence strategies, providing the first evidence that hierarchical rank, in addition to relationships between racial groups, shifts individuals' interaction goals in diverging ways across higher and lower ranks. This article overviews relevant previous research, as well as two independent lines of research, one on status (Swencionis & Fiske, 2016) and one on race (Dupree & Fiske, under review); we aim to show both their parallels across domain and their bearing on cross-class encounters more broadly. Illustrative experimental literature provides a useful background, but shows the need to investigate these status-race-class links.

Social Class and Status

Arguably, class and status show some parallel dynamics. To be sure, the social psychologies of social status and class are complex and multidimensional, with researchers continuing to debate the best measures of these constructs (Fiske, 2010; Kraus & Stephens, 2012). Social status is generally defined as a person's position in a relative social hierarchy, prestige, regardless of differences in power. Though higher status often coincides with increased control over valued resources

(power), this is not always the case: Sometimes high-ranked individuals lack the ability to enact change, and low-ranked individuals can affect others' outcomes in substantial ways (Fiske, 2010; Galinsky, Rucker, & Magee, 2015; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003).

Usually closely related to social status, social class does denote differences in power. For example, being born into a family considered lower, middle, or upper class in terms of income, education, and opportunities does indeed place a person at different levels in a relative hierarchy, but also by definition comes with differences in material and other resources such as social and cultural capital, the interpersonal connections and cultural understanding that enable higher-SES individuals to achieve higher educational and occupational outcomes, perpetuating inequality (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lott, 2012). Even in the absence of power differences, relatively higher status in the form of ordinal rank does confer more importance, respect, and prestige, with a person's subjective sense of relative position (e.g., sense of standing in a hierarchy) being just as important as objective measures (e.g., yearly income) in determining outcomes relevant to the self and to interpersonal interactions (Fiske, 2010; Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009; Kraus & Stephens, 2012).

Despite important distinctions, class and status overlap in some respects. Lower- and higher-income individuals bring differing concerns to a cross-class encounter, as do lower- and higher-status individuals. Low-status jobs signal lower competence (Fiske & Dupree, 2014); low-income people are seen as incompetent and untrustworthy (Lott & Bullock, 2001); low-status workers are often stigmatized (Volpato, Andrighetto, & Baldissarri, 2017); working-class students feel out of place in college as a middle-class setting (Jury et al., 2017) and are underappreciated (Batruch, Autin, & Butera, 2017). They are likely to be concerned about getting respect. High-status and high-income people however can take respect for granted, because status and class privilege assumes their competence (Durante et al., 2017; Durante et al., 2013; Jetten et al., 2017). They are likely to have other concerns, such as being liked.

These diverging concerns contribute to awkward, unsatisfying cross-class encounters (Becker, Kraus, & Rheinschmidt-Same, 2017). Social-classes clash as do separate cultural contexts (Markus, 2017). Similar dynamics extend beyond class to U.S. inter-racial encounters (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010), perhaps in part because Whites are associated with higher-status jobs and Blacks are associated with lower-status jobs (Dupree, Obioha, & Fiske, under review). In other contexts, other ethnic minorities would carry low-status associations (Durante et al., 2013): in Europe, Roma people; in the Americas and Australasia, indigenous people; and in most places, refugees. How ethnic groups relate across status also depends on cultural norms, such as power distance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Race, Class, and Status

U.S. society consistently represents Blacks and Latinos as low-status racial groups relative to Whites. As a social psychological example, stereotypes depicting Blacks as lower in competence than Whites have endured over the past century (Bergsieker, Leslie, Constantine, & Fiske, 2012; Krueger, 1996). Stereotyping racial minorities as low in competence reliably reflects lower perceived status (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Both Whites and Blacks hold explicit and implicit race-status associations—linking Whites with high status and Blacks with low status (Dupree et al., under review). These race-status associations have consequences for Blacks' and Whites' respective desire to attain or maintain high-status jobs.

Class, Race, and Status: Dimensions of Impression Management

Focusing the class-race-status investigation on two fundamental dimensions of impressions, warmth (liking) and competence (respect), stems theoretically from the Stereotype Content Model, showing that in dozens of countries, these two dimensions differentiate social groups (e.g., class, race, occupation) (see Fiske, 2015, for a review). These dimensions operate in interpersonal cross-class and cross-status impression formation (Russell & Fiske, 2008), as well as cross-race impressions (Bergsieker et al., 2010). Related dimensions account for 82% of the variance in personal impressions generally (Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998).

In a selective literature review and summaries of two recent research programs, we illustrate how impression management across status and race show marked similarities. In both cross-status and cross-race encounters, individuals portray themselves as more warm (versus competent) in downward social-status and racial comparisons, and more competent (versus warm) in upward comparisons, showing compensation effects in impression management (Kervyn, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2009) across status and racial divides. This prediction was based on past research showing that individuals seek to disconfirm stereotypes of unintelligence or immorality about their groups in interracial interactions, with Blacks and Latinos seeking respect, and Whites seeking liking (Bergsieker et al., 2010), and that individuals downplay their own warmth to appear competent, and downplay competence to appear warm (Holoien & Fiske, 2013). Moreover, competence is inferred from relative social status, and not only from membership in specific groups (Cuddy et al., 2009; Darley & Gross, 1983; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007). Hence, the motivation to disconfirm stereotypes may be a broader phenomenon that extends to relative status divides, including social class, in addition to emerging in interracial interactions (Bergsieker et al., 2010). Accordingly, we predicted relatively higher-status (and White) individuals will downplay their competence to appear warm,

whereas lower-status (and Black) individuals will downplay their warmth to appear competent. Thus, race will imitate status in these effects.

Interacting across Social-Class Divides

What interpersonal concerns arise when people interact with others who are relatively lower or higher than them in general social status? As noted, we define status as a person's position in a relative social hierarchy (such as social class). Relative differences in social status affect interpersonal interactions, as individuals gauge where an interaction partner stands in the social hierarchy: In one investigation of nonverbal behavior in interpersonal interactions, higher-SES participants showed greater disengagement compared to lower-SES participants, and separate observers accurately predicted these participants' socioeconomic status from these brief signals (Kraus & Keltner, 2009). Even without overt categorical differences (such as group memberships), people effectively communicate and understand signals of social standing, providing a ready basis for social comparisons.

Relative Status as Social Comparison

In contrast with Festinger's (1954) original theory suggesting that individuals prefer to use objective information instead of relative information about themselves, decades of subsequent research on social comparison reveals that individuals instead constantly and automatically compare themselves to others who are either better- or worse-off on a wide range of dimensions, including social status (for reviews, see Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Fiske, 2011). Much of this research investigates questions about when and why individuals choose to engage in upward and downward comparisons: Usually people choose upward comparison targets when they seek inspiration or information for self-improvement, and they prefer downward comparison targets when they seek self-enhancement (i.e., feeling better about their current level of standing) on a given dimension (e.g., Blanton, Crocker, & Miller, 2000; Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Festinger, 1954; Taylor & Lobel, 1989).

Although people use social comparisons to gauge their standing or motivate improvement, both kinds of comparisons are uncomfortable when they involve actually facing the upward- or downward-comparison target (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). One reason may be awareness that overt social comparisons are uncomfortable for everyone involved (Fiske, 2011). In any case, individuals are more likely to compare the self to a better- or worse-off other when they do not actually have to interact face to face.

Although past research helps to understand the reasons for engaging in upward and downward social comparisons, people are not always able to choose their preferred comparison target or even whether to compare. What approach do

individuals take when faced with an unavoidable upward or downward comparison, in a situation where they care about the outcome, or about the relationship between themselves and the comparison target? In societies whose social-class divides are larger than ever, individuals must cope more often with difficult interpersonal interactions involving better- or worse-off others. One method of coping may be for individuals to shift their impression-management strategies, crafting an image of the self as less starkly better- or worse-off than the comparison target. Such impression management may ease the mutual discomfort.

The Target's Perspective in Social Comparisons

Most of the social comparison literature focuses on the perceiver's perspective, including perceivers focusing on a downward- or upward-comparison target, according to different goals just noted. However, the perceiver perspective describes only one side of any comparison: In an interpersonal interaction, an entry-level employee might focus on qualities about the boss to try to emulate (perceiver perspective), but the employee might also consider what the boss thinks of the employee's own self (target perspective). The target's perspective in these comparisons is especially relevant to the interpersonal aspect of status: Although people might try to self-improve by copying qualities of higher-status targets, or self-enhance by comparing themselves favorably to lower-status targets, these goals pertain mostly to the self. Moving from the perceiver's to the target's perspective allows us to consider what *interpersonal* goals and concerns people might have in the context of a cross-status interaction: To what extent do people care about what someone else thinks of *them*, for example in terms of negative stereotypes about their own lower- or higher-status group?

A significant and growing literature describes the extensive negative effects of being the target of stigma, one kind of downward status comparison—not only in direct interpersonal interactions, but as a constant condition of life. Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998) define stigma as an “attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (p. 505). Thus, stigma applies to different social contexts, and it varies over time and across cultures; people could be stigmatized for any number of different devalued characteristics that mark them as lower status, and could be devalued in terms of warmth, competence, or both (Fiske, 1998; Kraus & Stephens, 2012; Kraus, Tan, & Tannenbaum, 2013; Major & O'Brien, 2005). In addition to the negative interpersonal consequences of being considered “less than,” the experience of stigma also leads to a host of detriments in achievement and health outcomes (for a review, see Major & O'Brien, 2005). These short- and long-lasting negative consequences all explain why people avoid being the target of downward comparisons.

Less thoroughly investigated, being the target of upward social comparison is also not necessarily a positive experience. As Exline and Lobel (1999, 2001) show,

individuals feel “sensitivity to being the target of a threatening upward comparison” (or “STTUC”) when they outperform someone they care about in a mutually important domain. This framework brings together past work on self-evaluation maintenance (e.g., Tesser & Collins, 1988) and other research perspectives to detail how being a target of envy can be aversive, leading to targets underestimating their own abilities or performance, and feeling guilty or distressed. Ironically, then, higher-status individuals may also encounter situations in which they would rather avoid their envied relative positions.

Managing Impressions across Social-Class Divides

From past research on status-based stereotypes, interpersonal interactions, and relative social comparisons, we predicted that individuals would attempt to manage impressions to avoid being stereotyped as cold or incompetent in respectively downward or upward status comparisons. However, as far as we know, no previous social psychology studies have investigated impression-management strategies across social-class or status divides.

A program of studies (Swencionis & Fiske, 2016) illustrates how social class operates as a status cue, prompting divergent impression management strategies for relatively lower- and higher-status individuals in interpersonal interactions. Defining status hierarchically, we operationalized status as participants’ relative position in their workplace hierarchies, as the workplace is the most prominent example of status in Americans’ daily lives (Fiske, 2010), and of course workplace status is highly correlated with social class.

We hypothesized that higher-status individuals, who are stereotyped as competent but cold, would try to disconfirm these stereotypes by using ingratiation strategies, downplaying their own competence in order to appear warmer. Conversely, we predicted that lower-status individuals, stereotyped as warm but incompetent, would use self-promotion strategies, downplaying their own warmth to appear more competent. Because relative status predicts these stereotyped warmth-competence differentials, we hypothesized that participants comparing themselves to someone with the same rank would not compensate by trading off warmth and competence in the same way.

These studies found that participants do adopt diverging impression management strategies when interacting with lower- versus higher-status others, emphasizing warmth while downplaying competence in downward comparisons, and emphasizing competence while downplaying warmth in upward comparisons (Swencionis & Fiske, 2016). Study 1 showed that downward versus upward status comparisons spontaneously drove warmth-competence tradeoffs in impression management, between superior and subordinate employees in participants’ workplaces. In other words, relatively higher-status employees played dumb, downplaying their own competence in order to appear warmer, while lower-status employees

downplayed their warmth to appear more competent. Studies 2a and 2b showed that goals to disconfirm status-based meta-stereotypes of their own alleged coldness or incompetence, as well as goals to match the stereotypic traits of their higher- or lower-status interaction partner, both determined impression-management strategies. In other words, the target's perspective and perceiver's perspective both contributed to participants' interpersonal goals. Finally, Study 3 replicated these diverging strategies and suggested that target- or perceiver-oriented interaction goals may depend on the comparison direction: Downward comparers especially have reason to disconfirm cold-but-competent meta-stereotypes, and upward comparers especially have reason to match their interaction partner's stereotyped high competence. Whether disconfirming stereotypes about one's own group or matching the stereotyped traits of the comparison target, participants try to minimize stereotyped gaps between self and other on dimensions of warmth and competence.

These studies have just begun to uncover the mechanisms behind diverging strategies in downward and upward status comparisons. Studies 2a and 2b show goals to disconfirm stereotypes and to match the comparison target are both important, and Study 3 shows different goals may apply downward versus upward; future work will need to disentangle these goals further, and investigate still other mechanisms.

Another limitation to be remedied by future work is the need to identify additional moderators, beyond the target's stereotypicality. For example, status may affect impression management differently, depending on the kind of hierarchy—the current work investigates workplace hierarchies, likely to have some specific goals and concerns. For example, in a host of other contexts—caseworker–client, lender–customer, donor–panhandler—higher-status individuals may not care whether subordinates think they are warm, and lower-status individuals may not want to seem excessively competent and ineligible for aid.

Future work should also extend to real interactions to see whether interpersonal *behaviors* follow diverging strategies. Finally, cross-cultural comparison might reveal whether American status systems are distinctive or fall on a continuum (e.g., places with more or less power distance). Nevertheless, these examinations of job hierarchies' cross-status impression management shed light on interpersonal cross-class encounters in the workplace.

Ties between Race and Status

In the United States, social group membership is often confounded with social class. Race is no exception. Race continues to reflect social status in several ways. Economic advancement exemplifies ties between status and race (we focus here on comparing Blacks and Whites). Not only do wealth disparities remain along these racial lines, but they are growing. Since the end of the Great Recession, the racial wealth gap has widened steadily. The Black–White wealth gap is now wider

than it has been since 1989 (Kochhar & Fry, 2014). White households continue to accrue more money than do Black households, putting Whites in a position of long-term economic advantage relative to Blacks.

The media strengthen ties between race and status, exaggerating the racial wealth gap by erroneously depicting the poor as primarily comprising Blacks (Gilens, 1996). (Although White households on average earn more income than do Black households, the majority of those living in poverty are White.) Furthermore, the media tend to portray Blacks living in poverty as either working or middle-aged, excluding the elderly and disabled—those who are most likely to elicit sympathy (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007; Gilens, 1996).

The stereotypes applied to different racial groups reflect this race-based status hierarchy. Perceptions of a social group's competence (capability, skill) reliably align with perceptions of a social group's status (prestige, economic success) (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008; Durante et al., 2017). As noted, stereotypes have long depicted racial minorities as lower in competence than Whites (Fiske et al., 2002; Krueger, 1996). Over 80 years ago, some of the most common stereotypes used to describe Blacks included “lazy,” “ignorant,” and “stupid” (Katz & Braly, 1933). More recently, stereotypes continue to characterize Blacks as “low in intelligence” and “ignorant” (Devine & Elliot, 1995; Krueger, 1996; Weaver, 2007). Racial minorities still being stereotyped as low in competence reflects a societal representation of Blacks as a low-status racial group relative to Whites.

People intuit that race reflects status. Stereotypically Black names imply lower status than do stereotypically White names, and markers of lower or higher social class also make biracial individuals seem more Black or more White, respectively, both to themselves and to others (Fryer & Levitt, 2004; Penner & Saperstein, 2008). These findings suggest the presence of a status hierarchy based on race. Recent work by Dupree et al. (under review) further supports this idea, finding that both White and Black participants implicitly and explicitly associated White targets with high-status positions and Black targets with low-status positions.

Approaching Cross-Race Interactions: The Role of Meta-Perceptions

The implied race-based status hierarchy may be one reason behind the observed tension in interracial interactions. Racial meta-perceptions—beliefs about what a racial outgroup member thinks about oneself as a member of a higher-status or lower-status racial group—contribute to such tensions. For Whites and Blacks, meta-perceptions can prompt a disinclination to engage in interracial contact. For example (Krueger, 1996), Whites and Blacks overestimated how negatively members of the other racial group viewed them. Furthermore, both White and Black students underestimated racial outgroup members' willingness to engage in interracial contact (Shelton & Richeson, 2005; Shelton, Richeson, & Bergsieker, 2009). Although Whites and Blacks showed interest in having more contact with

racial outgroup members, both sides thought that their own reasons for avoiding interracial contact differed from the racial outgroup members' reasons for avoidance. Whites and Blacks attribute their own failure to initiate interracial contact to a fear of race-based rejection, but they attribute outgroup members' inaction to a lack of interest. This phenomenon reveals how, for both Whites and racial minorities, meta-perceptions can give rise to basic misunderstandings that avert interracial contact.

When people do engage in interracial contact, meta-perceptions can quickly derail a successful interaction, elevating tension and anxiety. A large body of work on meta-stereotypes—beliefs about the stereotypes that another group holds toward one's own group—speaks to this effect. Members of the high-status racial group, Whites have negative expectations about how they will be viewed by members of a lower-status racial group (Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & O'Connell, 2000; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Such meta-stereotypes include expecting minorities to think they are selfish, egocentric, arrogant, or closed-minded. To be sure, some of the meta-stereotypes that Whites did hold were not explicitly negative (e.g., they expected Blacks to think they were wealthy). Rather, meta-perceptions reflected a contrast with the lower-status racial group, providing further evidence that Whites acknowledge a link between race and status. However, for Whites, holding negative meta-stereotypes was associated with negative emotions about intergroup contact and reduced self-concept clarity, supporting the idea that Whites' meta-stereotypical concerns may make them less enthusiastic about interacting with minorities (Vorauer et al., 1998).

Whites are not the only ones with meta-stereotypical concerns. Racial minorities, as low-status group members, also worry about being negatively stereotyped by outgroup members. Of Black adults nationwide, over 75% of respondents thought that most Whites view Blacks as less intelligent than Whites (Sigelman & Tuch, 1997). These racial minorities' meta-stereotypical concerns have implications for the classroom. Black students have negative expectations for White instructors' ability to evaluate their work fairly (Brown & Dobbins, 2004). Furthermore, Black students generally judge the probability of being negatively stereotyped by White evaluators as high—unless provided counter-stereotypical information about the evaluator (Wout, Shih, Jackson, & Sellers, 2009).

Managing Cross-Race Interactions: Goals and Strategies

In ways that parallel our earlier description of status divides generally, racial meta-stereotypical concerns may prompt Whites and Blacks to develop distinct impression-management goals and self-presentational strategies in hopes of successfully navigating such cross-race interactions. Bergsieker et al. (2010) examined this very question, testing the prediction that Whites and racial minorities would have different impression-management goals when interacting

with each other. Indeed, Whites and minorities do have divergent interaction goals that reflect meta-stereotypical concerns: When interacting with racial minorities, Whites had the goal to appear more likeable. In contrast, when interacting with Whites, racial minorities had the goal to appear more worthy of respect (Bergsieker et al., 2010). This pattern of divergent goal preferences held even for Whites and minorities who were in pre-existing relationships, suggesting that meta-stereotypical concerns may impact interracial interactions over time.

How might these impression management goals translate to specific strategies that Whites and Blacks use to meet these goals in interracial interactions? In an assessment of Whites' and Blacks' behavior when responding to a (presumably) real interaction partner, Bergsieker et al. (2010) tested whether Whites' and Blacks' behavioral tendencies would correspond with the divergent impression management goals found previously. More specifically, they predicted that Whites' and Blacks' tendency to emphasize their competence through self-promotion or emphasize their likeability through ingratiation would diverge in interracial interactions but that no such difference should emerge in same-race interactions. Their findings supported this prediction. Whites who were highly engaged in the interaction showed more ingratiation than self-promotion when responding to a Black confederate than when responding to a White one. However, the difference between self-promotion and ingratiation did not reach significance when they responded to a White confederate. For Black participants, this pattern flipped. Although Black participants showed more self-promotion than ingratiation when interacting with a White confederate, this difference did not reach significance for a same-race interaction (Bergsieker et al., 2010). Whites and Blacks respond to the distinct impression-management goals generated by the meta-stereotypical concerns unique to an interracial context.

Recently, Dupree and Fiske (under review) extended this work by examining Whites' strategic behavioral choices that aim to meet their interracial goals, which turn out to mimic strategies used by high-status impression managers described previously. The prior work on Whites' meta-stereotypical concerns and impression management goals suggest that Whites should present more warmth and less competence to members of low-status racial outgroup members in order to avoid appearing prejudiced. Further, these warmth and competence tradeoffs should be most apparent among egalitarian Whites, those most likely to hold warmth-related goals toward minorities. Evidence supported these predictions. White students had more warmth-related goals with a Black interaction partner than a White one. And Whites who were low in Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981), a measure of social conservatism, engaged in a competence downshift, presenting less competence to a Black interaction partner than a White one (Dupree & Fiske, under review).

Not all Black interaction partners elicited a warmth/competence tradeoff from social liberals. Providing counter-stereotypical information about a Black partner

(e.g., as exceptionally competent)—making such a partner less likely to evoke meta-stereotypical concerns—reduced the warmth-related goals that Whites held when interacting with minorities: Whites presented more competence and less warmth toward a counter-stereotypical minority partner than a stereotypical one (Dupree & Fiske, under review).

Finally, Dupree and Fiske explored the generalizability of this phenomenon by examining White Democratic or Republican presidential candidates' speeches delivered to majority–White or majority–minority audiences. Although White Republicans did not shift warmth or competence based on audience race, White Democrats replicated the White liberal competence downshift, presenting less competence and more warmth to majority–minority audiences than to majority–White audiences (Dupree & Fiske, under review).

The competence downshift displayed by socially liberal Whites toward Black audiences further suggests that race can in some ways mirror status. Replicating the impression management techniques utilized by high-status group members in reacting to low-status group members (Swencionis & Fiske, 2016), Whites showed evidence of “talking down” to racial minorities (Dupree & Fiske, under review). Furthermore, individual differences promote this talking-down effect, for the competence downshift was unique to those most likely to be motivated to engage with racial minorities and avoid meta-stereotypes—socially liberal Whites. This work provides a step forward in illuminating the impression management strategies used by egalitarian Whites across racial lines, demonstrating the conditions in which patronizing behavior can emerge from well-intentioned origins in racial contexts.

This research adds to the work that examines how members of high-status groups relate to low-status group members, and vice versa. Whites prioritize ingratiation over self-promotion when responding to Blacks (Bergsieker et al., 2010). Socially liberal Whites go a step further—engaging in a competence downshift by presenting less competence to a Black interaction partner than a White one (Dupree & Fiske, under review).

In contrast, Blacks prioritize self-promotion over ingratiation when responding to Whites (Bergsieker et al., 2010). Black impression managers also tended to display more competence to a White partner than a Black one (Dupree & Fiske, under review). Similarly, when meta-stereotypes about their group were activated, Black men selectively prioritized self-presentational strategies that could make them appear less threatening to Whites, such as smiling (Neel, Neufeld, & Neuberg, 2013).

Admittedly, the evidence so far has limitations. The question remains: How effective are Whites' and Blacks' impression management strategies? Few in the field have addressed this question, but some work suggests that Whites' impression management strategies may fall short. This may be especially true for those most likely to engage with racial minorities and hold meta-stereotypical concerns. Whites high in the desire to affiliate with racial minority roommates or strangers

still may fail to accurately understand them (Holoien, Bergsieker, Shelton, & Alegre, 2015). Unfortunately, Whites' overestimation of how much they understood their partner correlated negatively with minority partners' reports of relationship quality. Counterintuitively, less well-intentioned Whites can be more likely to successfully interact with racial minorities. When in the presence of others, implicitly prejudiced Whites are more willing to engage with minorities and show more prosocial behavior toward minorities (Dupree, Sinclair, & Smith, under review), perhaps because they feel challenged in an inter-racial interaction.

Impression management strategies used by Whites may prove positive (e.g., outgroup approach from implicitly prejudiced Whites) or negative (e.g., a potentially patronizing competence downshift from socially liberal Whites). For Blacks, preoccupation with negative meta-stereotypes may prompt behavioral responses that are competent, but cold, alienating White partners.

Future research would do well to continue examination of the meta-perceptions, impression management goals, and behavioral strategies used by members of higher- or lower-status racial groups interacting with others within and across racial bounds. Expanding both the ideological and the cross-cultural moderators of these racial dynamics also would be useful.

General Discussion

Literature review and recent studies advance previous research in two critical ways. First, compensation effects (tradeoffs) in impression management result not only from specific social goals to show warmth or competence (Holoien & Fiske, 2013), but also spontaneously from hierarchical social contexts defined by workplace rank. Second, building on research showing divergent impression management goals in cross-race interactions, warmth-competence tradeoffs apparently extend to a broader set of cross-status interactions, even in the absence of specific race or group-based stereotypes, as seen in the studies showing diverging strategies across mere status divides. Race does imitate status. We are not the first to claim that race signals status, and our literature review has been (by necessity of space) selected merely to illustrate some potential relationships among warmth-competence tradeoffs, race, status, and class.

In a postrecession environment with increased inequality and social-status divides more marked than ever, social-class cues in interpersonal interactions seem unavoidable. Learning how people navigate interactions with lower- and higher-status others (and ultimately, whether their strategies are successful) will help illuminate the difficult dynamics of cross-status interactions in such a status-conscious context.

Broader implications of these interpersonal dynamics include human resource management in diverse workplaces, where minorities, lower-status workers, and lower-income people seek respect, to match those of higher rank—whereas

majorities, higher-status workers, and higher-income people seek liking, to reassure themselves that they are not resented and not immoral or prejudiced people. Managing awkward interactions can benefit from knowing this.

Individual beliefs, such as feelings of entitlement, can legitimate inequality (Rodriguez-Bailon et al., 2017). Individual interactions likewise perpetuate and express status divides, hindering action to make a more egalitarian society.

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